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Why wait
to go electric

\$10,000 trade-in support



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14 Parting shot: Dhoni faces red-hot Gill in IPL final



Calls for bike lanes after motorist mows down cyclists on Gulf Road

Hit-and-run suspect turns self in • MoI says peloton was riding without permit



KUWAIT: Medics attend to bikers after a car hit a group of cyclists on Arabian Gulf Road on May 26, 2023.

By Sahar Moussa and Ahmad Jabr

KUWAIT: Cyclists in Kuwait are again appealing to the government for dedicated bike lanes after an accident on Friday left several people injured, including one person in coma. Around 15 people were hurt following the hit-and-run accident that happened on Arabian Gulf Road Friday morning. The victims were among a group of around 60 people who usually practice the sport weekly.

"We were cycling as usual when a car driving recklessly hit us from behind," Darius Lumocso, 50, told Kuwait Times from his bed at Mubarak Hospital. He is among four people who were taken to Mubarak Hospital, while seven others were rushed to Amiri Hospital, including two in critical condition. One of them is recovering from emergency surgery after sustaining fractured ribs and punctured lungs in the accident. The other person remains in coma in the ICU.

The health ministry said later on Friday that nine out of 11 people injured in the incident have been discharged from hospital after receiving necessary medical care. Two persons remain in Amiri Hospital, including one in

the ICU and the other in the surgery department, Health Ministry Spokesman Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad said.

Eyewitnesses reported two young people were in the car that was driving recklessly before it hit the group around 4:30 am. "The kids were driving recklessly. It was as if they were playing," Lumocso said. He said that the two people in the car looked "very young", adding that they fled the scene immediately after the accident happened. Several eyewitness reports confirmed that the suspects escaped following the accident. According to Lumocso, the suspects were later identified and held by police at Maidan Hawally police station for questioning. Kuwait Times' attempts to contact police officials for a statement were not immediately returned. The interior ministry released a statement on Friday confirming that the accident had happened and said a search was still ongoing for the culprit. It noted that a biker group had not obtained prior permission from authorities to organize the ride. The ministry later released a statement saying the driver who caused the accident turned himself in to police and is being held in custody for further legal procedures.

Continued on Page 6

MoI: Body of missing citizen found in Salmi

KUWAIT: The body of Kuwaiti citizen Mubarak Al-Rashidi, who had been missing since mid-April, has been found in Salmi, the interior ministry said late Friday. Under instructions from First Deputy Prime Minister, Interior Minister and Acting Minister of Defense Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, the General Directorate of Criminal Investigations had launched a search campaign since the disappearance of Rashidi from Kabd on March 13.



Mubarak Al-Rashidi

Hundreds of security personnel, including from the departments of public security, traffic, central operations, patrols and helicopters, as well as volunteers, had joined the search. They worked relentlessly around the clock until they located the body, the ministry's general directorate of security relations and media said in a press release. The ministry expressed sincere condolences to the bereaved family, pledging to continue searching for clues as to what led to Rashidi's death.

A police source said three persons are involved in the case — two brothers who are in jail over Rashidi's killing and an Egyptian who is jailed in his country for helping transfer the body to the Salmi desert after he died in a camp in Kabd. The source said interrogations are still ongoing with the main suspect in the case, who was arrested following the disappearance of Rashidi after his family filed a complaint against him.

Continued on Page 6

Marcos rejects total deployment ban to Kuwait

MANILA: Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr on Friday rejected a proposal to impose a total ban on the deployment of Filipino workers to Kuwait, which he said would be an "overreaction"

to its suspension of visas for new Filipino workers. Reacting to lawmakers' call for a total deployment ban to Kuwait, Marcos expressed opposition to the idea, saying he does not want to "burn any bridges" with Kuwait.

Marcos said he was "never very comfortable" with completely stopping the deployment of overseas Filipino workers to Kuwait. "I don't want to burn any bridges...perhaps in the future, in a little while, a few months from now, a year from now, the situa-

tion would change and we would need to send workers again to Kuwait. That is why I don't know, sometimes people overreact, we keep on banning things even though it's not the right move," he told reporters on the sidelines of the Philippine Navy's 125th anniversary celebration at its headquarters on Roxas Boulevard in the City of Manila.

For now, the Philippines will respect Kuwait's decision, Marcos said. "We have to react to the situation as it is. And I think the proper reaction is to take

the decision of the Kuwaiti government to no longer issue new visas," he said. The president added that he preferred to settle the issue through diplomatic negotiations. "It's their country. Those are their rules. So, we will just leave that issue open," he said, while remaining bullish that Kuwait might reconsider accepting OFWs and lift its deployment ban "in a little while".

Kuwait imposed an entry ban and suspended visa issuance to all Filipinos

Continued on Page 6

Iraq unveils \$17bn project linking Europe, Mideast

BAGHDAD: Iraq on Saturday presented an ambitious plan to turn itself into a regional transportation hub by developing its road and rail infrastructure, linking Europe with the Middle East. Once completed, the \$17 billion project known as the "Route of Development" would span the length of the country, stretching 1,200 km from the northern border with Turkey to the Gulf in the south.

Prime Minister Mohamed Shia al-Sudani announced the project during a conference with transport ministry representatives from Kuwait, Iran, Jordan, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates.

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BAGHDAD: Iraqi Prime Minister Mohamed Shia Al-Sudani attends a meeting with transport ministry representatives on May 27, 2023. — AFP

Egypt unveils ancient tombs and workshops

SAQQARA, Egypt: Archaeologists in Egypt have unearthed two human and animal embalming workshops, as well as two tombs, discovered in the Saqqara necropolis south of Cairo, the government said on Saturday. The vast burial site, at the ancient Egyptian capital Memphis, is a UNESCO World Heritage site and home to more than a dozen pyramids, ani-

mal graves and old Coptic Christian monasteries.

Mostafa Waziri, head of Egypt's Supreme Council of Antiquities, told reporters the embalming workshops, where humans and animals were mummified, "date back to the 30th dynasty" which reigned around 2,400 years ago. The discovery also includes the tombs of two priests dating back to the 24th and 14th centuries BC, respectively. The first belonged to Ne Hesut Ba, who served the fifth dynasty as the head of scribes and priest of the gods Horus and Maat. The second tomb is that of a priest named Men Kheber. — AFP



SAQQARA: Mostafa Waziri, head of Egypt's Supreme Council of Antiquities, unveils a newly discovered sarcophagus in the Saqqara necropolis on May 27, 2023. — AFP



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Local

Some expatriates try to cover travel expenses by subletting apartments

Popular practice illegal, puts homes at risk of vandalism

By Majd Othman

KUWAIT: The high cost of living and the advent of the holiday travel season is driving some expats in Kuwait to take unexpected actions to cover their traveling expenses during summer. Many expats are subletting their rented apartments for the duration of the time they are visiting their home countries — around two to three months.

This action is not only illegal under Kuwaiti law, which prevents subletting apartments and may expose them to accountability, but it can also lead to many other problems, starting from transmission of infectious diseases due to using the same furnishings and household items, disturbing the neighbors by bringing in strangers, and loss of rights if the lessors are scammed or their home is vandalized by the temporary renters.

Kuwait Times contacted several expats who sublet their rental apartments, who revealed they are forced to do so due to rising inflation that is affecting everything and making their life harder, especially families that need many necessities of life to survive.

Shaimaa Ahmad told Kuwait Times that she started thinking to do this after the pandemic, as prices skyrocketed, specifically of airfares. She said they barely managed to pay for the tickets that cost them almost KD 700 for the family, which includes three children.

Shaimaa pointed out that she wouldn't have been able to travel unless she recovered part of the money spent on tickets, adding her friend advised her to sublet her apartment during her holiday. She said she wasn't able to visit her country in the four years due to the pandemic and financial responsibilities, but she managed to do so after renting out her apartment.

Rasha Sulaiman told Kuwait Times subletting rental apartments has become very popular in the last couple of years among expats due to several advantages. Firstly, they do not have to pay rent during their absence; secondly, appliances such as the fridge and air conditioners can be maintained, and thirdly, the apartment doesn't become musty as people are using it.

But Lubna Mohyi said her family regretted renting out their apartment, as when they came back from their trip, she was shocked by the level of damage in the apartment. She said she found many broken items, the walls were filthy and the kitchen was full of insects due to lack of cleaning by the subtenants. Lubna added that because it is illegal to sublet, she couldn't do anything about it or file a complaint, lamenting it cost her much money to repair the damage.

Despite being illegal, social media, especially Facebook, is full of advertisements that offer flats on temporary rent by expats. A post on social media on this topic can result in hundreds of responses offering such apartments. In addition, some post their phone numbers openly, offering discounts and other offers to attract people.

Kuwait Times asked many lessors if their renters can be exposed to any problems with the authorities or neighbors. But most of them said neighbors are not an issue, as this is a well-known practice, especially in overcrowded areas such as



Hawally, Salmiya, Farwaniya, Mahboula and others. Some also said they won't do so without the approval of neighbors on the same floor to prevent any complaints. Kuwait Times tried to contact authorities in Kuwait to ask about any consequences renters can face, but received no response.

Heart Foundation launches 6-month awareness campaign

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Kuwait Heart Foundation has launched a major awareness campaign using audio-visuals and social media platforms in cooperation with a major company that specializes in information technology. The foundation's Secretary General Dr Rashid Al-Owayesh, said the campaign started in April under the theme "My Heart" and will last for six months. It is divided into three stages, with each slotted to take two months.

The first stage will be a teaser campaign for "My Heart", while the second will be the detailed one, during which there will be interviews with seven specialized doctors in heart disease. These interviews will be shown on a local TV station and all social media platforms. The third stage will end on World Heart Day, which falls on September 29.

Owayesh said the foundation aims to reduce the number of deaths resulting from heart disease by encouraging periodic testing for the early detection of heart diseases. Throughout its 40 years of existence (established in 1982), the foundation has recorded many achievements, including raising awareness about heart diseases, smoking, obesity, excess weight, unhealthy diets and physical lethargy (inactivity). He said the foundation is proud of its patriotic social role in supporting medical research in the field of heart diseases and prevention, in addition to supporting researchers in conducting studies and attending international conferences.

Lebanese, Chinese ageing experts honored with Sheikh Sabah Prize

GENEVA: His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah Prize for Research in Health Care for the Elderly and in Health Promotion reflects the position of the elderly as a major development priority in health programs, Minister of Health Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi said Friday.

This came in the minister's speech before a ceremony of delivering the award within the framework of the 76th World Health Assembly on May 21-30. The elderly deserve care and attention, in recognition of their sincere efforts during their career, he said. The prize shows one of the bright signs and positive initiatives of constructive cooperation between Kuwait and the World Health Organization (WHO) over six decades since Kuwait joined the organization, he elaborated.

Representing Kuwait, the minister expressed his delight at partaking in this occasion. Dr Abla Sibai, dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences (FHS) at the American University of Beirut and Dr. Wu Jing, head of China's National Center for Chronic and Non-communicable Disease Control and Prevention won the prize. Sibai was named for the prize due to her prominent contributions in the elderly health in Lebanon. In addition, Sibai has developed the "national strategy for the elderly" in Lebanon and established the Arab network on ageing and the center for geriatric studies for the relation



GENEVA: Minister of Health Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi speaks at the World Health Assembly before the award ceremony. — KUNA

between research and policy at the national, regional and international levels. Meanwhile, the Chinese center was chosen for the prize as it has included a facility for the health of the elderly since 2013 and delivered a broad range of activities that advance health promotion for the elderly. The center aims to improve the mental and cognitive health of older people,

which involves more than 700,000 people from nearly 2,000 urban and rural areas. WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said "at a time when the world faces many challenges, each of you is an inspiration and a reminder of the progress that can be made to improve health and well-being for all. I salute you all and I thank you all". — KUNA



Women roll Yaprak Sarmasi (stuffed grape leaves), a Turkish vegetarian dish.



Ambassador Sonmez brews Turkish coffee over hot sand, a traditional method that creates even heat.



The Turkish Ambassador stuffs Manti (Hengel), dumplings usually served with a yogurt and butter sauce.

Turkish Food Week celebrates unique Hatay cuisine

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: On the occasion of Turkish Food Week, Turkish Ambassador to Kuwait Tuba Nur Sonmez hosted local media representatives to taste traditional Turkish food at her residence. The ambassador on the importance of cultural exchange to enhance communication and mutual understanding, pointing out that food is one of the most prominent characteristics of peoples' culture, because it is a part of their daily lives.

Sonmez indicated the Turkish Food Week will present distinctive and diverse flavors from May 21-27, held in its second year. "Turkish cuisine is rich in internationally known delicious dishes, which are highly demanded in different countries of the world. The Turkish Food Week is an opportunity to introduce more Turkish dishes with unique flavors," she said.

Sonmez noted the weeklong event features unique recipes from timeless Turkish cuisine, while

highlighting the sustainability of an age-old culinary tradition where pots have been boiling with the philosophy of zero waste for millennia, pointing out that Turkish cuisine is naturally waste-free, with recipes that use every component of each product and stand out with a sustainable structure. Meals are prepared without wasting ingredients, and tables are laden with healing specialties, she added.

Sonmez revealed that this year's special menu consists of local dishes from the cuisine of Hatay that are included in the UNESCO Creative Cities Network in gastronomy. "Featuring more than 650 dishes, Hatay's gastronomy is a Mediterranean cuisine characterized by fresh vegetables, quality olive oil and legumes and cereals. Hatay's cuisine, showcased in this year's international events, includes flatbread with red pepper paste, olive salad, hummus, kisir (fine bulgur salad), oven-baked kebab and kunefe (dessert with cheese)," she explained.

The Turkish ambassador stressed the importance of food diplomacy in bringing peoples together, as it is an effective mechanism in spreading culture and solving problems, noting the Kuwaiti people know Turkish cuisine because Turkey is one of the favorite tourist destinations for Kuwaitis, in addition to the presence of around 70 Turkish restaurants in Kuwait, along with hotels that offer popular Turkish food.



KUWAIT: Turkish women prepare food as part of the event hosted by Turkish Ambassador to Kuwait Tuba Nur Sonmez. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Local

Zain strategic partner of 18th Arab Media Forum

KUWAIT: Zain announces its strategic partnership with the 18th Arab Media Forum, which kicks-off Sunday in the Diamond Hall at the St Regis Hotel Kuwait. The event continues until May 29 and comes under the patronage of HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

Zain's strategic partnership with the forum extended throughout the past 10 years and comes this year to further reflect the company's strong belief in the significant role media plays within the community. By sponsoring the event, Zain contributes to shouldering the local and regional media sectors and continues to support the Arab World's biggest media gathering.

The event's program is set to feature Zain Kuwait CEO Eaman Al-Roudhan joining a special panel discussion on the impact of technology in the progress and sustainability of communities. The panel will also

feature Kuwait Airways CEO Maen Razouqi and Director General of the Central Agency for Information Technology (CAIT) Dr Ammar Al-Hussaini and will be moderated by Omani journalist Mousa Al-Farie.

Zain has prepared a number of cultural programs and activities for the forum, including a workshop on the essentials of hosting TV, radio, and podcast shows and a workshop on creative writing, both hosted by media influencer Ali Najem. The company also hosts a special talk show, Zain Microphone, at the event, hosted by TV presenter Abdulrahman Al-Jaser, where he'll interview some of the event's top guests to discuss the future of media and the impact of technologies like AI on the age of information.

This year, the Arab Media Forum celebrates its 20th year, and comes under support from the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS).

The event is set to welcome high-profile executives from the Arab world, including foreign affairs ministers, media and information ministers, owners and executives of Arab media institutions, media personalities, journalists, authors, actors and more.

Zain's annual presence in this forum highlights its commitment to become a socially responsible organization that actively contributes to developing the communities in which it operates. The company will continue supporting this unique event that is considered the top in the region.

The Arab Media Forum has proven itself to be one of the region's most prominent events attended by Arab media. Since 2003, the event brought together many ministers, editors-in-chief of local and regional newspapers, media executives, journalists, academics, authors, actors, businessmen, and social figures from all around the Arab world.



Arab Media Forum to tackle dramas, marketing strategies

KUWAIT/CAIRO: The Arab Media Forum is kicking off Sunday in Kuwait under the auspices of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Sabah. The Forum Secretary General Madhi Al-Khamees, in a statement to KUNA Saturday, said the forum is keen on translating speeches of His Highness the Amir and His Highness the Crown Prince into action by promoting media action among Arab countries and people. Khamees thanked media sectors in Kuwait and Arab League for contributing to the success of the forum. The Arab League said on Saturday that it would partake in the Arab Media Forum, which reflects the significance and attention it pays to joint Arab media action. Assistant Secretary-General for Media and Communications Ambassador Ahmad Khattabi said in a press statement. The league commits to throwing much weight behind the activities and events of Arab organizations and agencies working under the umbrella of the Council of Arab Information Ministers, he said.

The event features 14 seminars dealing with a host of media issues, with the participants mainly discussing Arab drama, media and marketing strategies as well as role in media in economic development. They will be preceded by an exhibition about media, communication technologies and applications. Khamees said seminars would discuss future of media, passion of success, force of media and diversity of sources, media and life, content creation in social media, and future of media amidst artificial intelligence. — KUNA



GCC and UK officials discussed, as part of ongoing talks, a bilateral free-trade agreement last week.



Kuwaiti and UK delegates held talks last week on matters of mutual interest.

UK, Kuwait officials discuss bolstering ties

LONDON/RIYADH: A high-ranking official of the Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs held talks late last week with senior British officials on bilateral relations and regional and international issues of mutual concern. Ambassador Sadeq Marafi, the assistant foreign minister for Europe's affairs, who held the talks, told KUNA that the discussions came at the start of a European tour. He revealed that they were held with Juliette Wilcox, the Cyber Security Ambassador for UK Defence and Security Exports at the Department for International Trade. State of Kuwait Ambassador to Britain and North Ireland Badr Al-Awadhi attended the meeting. He indicated that the discussions touched on preparations for celebrating the 70th anniversary of the Kuwaiti Investment Office in Britain and the 125th anniversary of the bilateral relations. Marafi added that he sensed from the British side keenness on bolstering the relations in political, economic, military and security spheres. They also affirmed London's unwavering commitment to safeguard Kuwait's security and sovereignty, he added. The meetings constituted an opportunity to address some academic issues and prospects of facilitating procedures for Kuwaiti students studying in Britain, Marafi said.

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) is also seeking to bolster its trade and investment rela-



RIYADH: GCC Secretary General Jassim Al-Budaiwi and Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy of United Kingdom Kemi Badenoch shake hands after a meeting last week to discuss bolstering ties.

tions with the UK, the bloc's secretary general Jassim Al-Budaiwi said, citing a recent round of talks between both sides. Greater trade relations would help bring progress to ongoing talks over a bilateral free trade agreement, the bloc's chief told UK Trade



LONDON: Ambassador Sadeq Marafi, Kuwait's assistant foreign minister for Europe's affairs (right) is seen with UK Minister Tareq Ahmad at their meeting last week. — KUNA photos

Secretary and Minister for Women and Equalities Kemi Badenoch, who is also a lawmaker in Britain's parliament. A fresh round of talks on the matter is slated for July in the British capital London, according to a GCC statement. — KUNA

Online opinion polls threaten objectivity: Expert

KUWAIT: Opinion polls are an integral part of democracies all over the world, affirmed two Kuwaiti experts, clarifying that polls play a vital role in analyzing variables and painting a primary picture for election results. Pollster Salah Al-Jassem spoke of the history of public opinion polls in Kuwait saying that they have been in use in parliamentary and municipal elections since the nineties. As for the tightly-knit relation between polls and elections, Jassem explained that it stems from the sheer importance of elections in determining the future of the nation, adding that Kuwaiti people are not only interested in forecasting results but are also keen on participating in such surveys and expressing their opinions freely.

When it comes to the role of polls in aiding candidates, Jassem, who is also head of a polling institute, affirmed the importance that such institutions remain independent to ensure integrity and reliability. He said the results of the polls may have an impact on decision makers, with National Assembly members being interested in knowing the opinions of people in their constituencies in order to build their election platforms around what people need.

Jassem pointed to the role of polls in



monitoring reality and analyzing public opinion, views and trends. Jassem's institute conducts periodic surveys to analyze public opinion, and examine whether parliamentary positions are popular, as per request of National Assembly members. Chief of Gyas group for political and strategic consultations, Nassar Al-Khalidi, stated that phone polls are preferable to online polls as internet surveys lack the basic standards, threatening objectivity of results. He said sup-

porters of some candidates attempt to get the largest number of responses to a survey related to the candidate. That way, the poll gives the impression that the sample size is larger than it actually is. Khalidi emphasized that these polls only represent the opinions of the people surveyed and not all people registered to vote.

Khalidi mentioned that surrounding environment, pressure factors, and outer influences all play a role in defining opinions

of voters. Therefore, the timing of polls significantly influences outcomes. He clarified that experts strongly recommend phrasing highly intricate questions, determining the sample, describing it and clarifying modes of selection as well as specifying the time and place of the surveys. These guidelines, he said, could allow polls to provide a more comprehensive picture contributing to the integrity and transparency of the democratic process. — KUNA

Experts call on next parliamentary session to focus on youth

KUWAIT: Developing the youth and harnessing their capabilities is an important task ahead for winners of the 2023 National Assembly election, said an academic on Friday. Speaking to KUNA, Econometrics professor Abdullah Al-Shami said the increasing number of 25-26-aged youth eligible for work requires the upcoming parliament to legislate laws that would harness their skills for the betterment of the country. He stressed the importance of establishing more government-run universities with an emphasis on programs that train nurses and physicians in order to produce more national cadres that cover jobs in the health sector. Forming government-owned companies and hiring Kuwaiti youth would hopefully prove beneficial to the country and its people, said Shami who called on the future parliament to

put that into consideration. He said the government should invest in young people and create projects that harness their talents to reduce the level of unemployment in the country. He also called for making job-qualifying exams less stringent to quickly fill vacancies in government sectors.

Head of the Kuwait Youth Assembly Nawaf Al-Azmi stressed that development could not be achieved unless there was stability, especially in parliament. The National Assembly must and should focus on youth-centric matters and issues for the country to develop in the future, affirmed the official. Obstacles facing the youth, he said, must not be left unresolved. He revealed that he was looking forward to cooperation amongst the legislative and executive authorities, saying that such collaboration would stabilize and would enable the youth to shine and excel in each of their respective fields.

It's worth noting that the Kuwaiti Youth Assembly is an advisory youth council concerned with analyzing the reality, needs and potentials of young people. The assembly aims to enhance youth community participation and help them express their issues through providing consultations and programs and



Nawaf Al-Azmi



Abdullah Al-Shami

giving recommendations and proposals to decision makers in an organized and thoughtful manner at the state level. The idea of establishing the council came under the guidance of the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, who paid attention to the youth, listened to them and emphasized that they are the real wealth of the country by enabling them to contribute to the society. — KUNA

Election candidates' chances hinge on social media strategy

KUWAIT: Some 2023 National Assembly election candidates have been using social media platforms to promote their programs and agenda; however, their strategy could make or break the hopefuls' chance of earning a seat at the Abdullah Al-Salem parliamentary hall. Political science professor at Kuwait University Ibrahim Al-Hadban said that in the past regular media such as television, radio and newspapers were the most important outlets that candidates could use to relay their messages. He went on to say that the new media, spearheaded by social media platforms, tends to reach more audiences due to the use of the internet and costs less than opening a campaign headquarters. Knowing how to use Facebook, Twitter and TikTok has become necessary to most candidates, argued Hadban, adding that some might abuse such platforms to promote shortsighted promises for the sake of gaining votes.

Kuwait University media professor Nasser Al-Mjaibil predicted that the use of direct contact with eligible voters might possibly decrease in the future. Social media could be viewed as a double-edged sword, any word or promise by a candidate could backfire or be put under scrutiny. Therefore, it should be used wisely. Fellow media professor Yousef Al-Daihani affirmed that candidates now must have the new media as part of their campaign to reach the most-sought seat at Abdullah Al-Salem Hall. Voters could browse the official social media accounts of the candidate and get an initial idea of their agenda and plans, he indicated, warning at the same time, that social media posts were not entirely based on facts — false information could leak and ruin the image of any given candidate. Asked about the influence of social media on voters, Daihani brought in an example of Twitter. Popular tweets that carry a certain political view or were heavily retweeted by followers might cause many eligible voters to remain silent on social media due to fear of being ostracized even if the said tweet had some dangerous consequences once the candidate reached parliament, said the academic. He called on social media users to be responsible and critically think before liking or sharing a view on the internet. — KUNA



Nasser Al-Mjaibil



Yousef Al-Daihani

News in Brief

Kuwait not in favor of hiring
domestic workers from India

KUWAIT: Informed sources revealed Kuwait did not respond to an Indian government request to recruit Indian domestic workers, indicating this lack of response is due to Kuwait's desire to diversify countries to bring in new workers from, as Indians exceed one million residents in Kuwait. The sources said Kuwait's unwillingness to recruit Indian domestic workers does not mean the suspension of work permits for Indians, but these will be limited to needed workers, whether for the private or public sector. They noted the suspension of work permits for Egyptian workers, in force since September, is a different matter, as Kuwait stopped permits for Egyptians due to a lack of agreement on how to bring in workers and until Egypt addresses violations by recruitment companies operating in Egypt, which contribute to human trafficking and fake companies. The sources pointed out the recruitment of workers from India is currently limited to specialized labor, especially medical, nursing and technical specialties.

No injuries reported at
Mubarakia restaurant fire

KUWAIT: Firemen put out a limited fire in a restaurant in Mubarakia. Central operations rushed to the scene after the officials received a call about the fire. Madina and Hilaly firemen were dispatched to put out the fire which started from the chimney of the building. No injuries were reported.

Physiotherapy helped
1,659 lymphoma cases

KUWAIT: Head of the physiotherapy department at Kuwait Cancer Control Center (KCCC), Hanaa Al-Khamis, said that the department has dealt with 1,659 cases of lymphoma tumors since 2016. Khamis, who spoke on the sidelines of the center's first awareness day for lymphoma, said the physiotherapy department at KCCC has four physiotherapists who are licensed by the USA Academy. The department has been putting more focus on raising awareness about the role of physiotherapy in managing lymphoma cases and recording patients' statistics since 2016. She said that the awareness campaigns have led to more patients seeking the department's services.

Photo of the day



KUWAIT: This aerial photo shows the Darwaza Al-Abd Al-Razzaq tunnel and intersection in Kuwait City. The tunnel and intersection have been closed to traffic since October 2020 for a maintenance project. The project was set to be concluded in January 2023, following several delays. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Two thirds of buildings in Sabah
Al-Ahmad nearly ready for citizens

Housing minister calls for meeting to hasten South Qairawan project

KUWAIT: The Public Authority for Housing Welfare will soon receive two thirds of the completed residential buildings in Sabah Al-Ahmad residential area, said the authority in a statement to KUNA.

The area, which is still under development, includes 60 residential buildings with 1110 apartments, of which 40 will be delivered to the authority for distribution to people in the social welfare system.

Construction in the remaining buildings is 94 percent complete, said the authority, with workers currently in the process of supplying the buildings with electricity.

Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy Mutlaq Al-Otaibi urged the authority and contractors to complete construction work as soon as possible and distribute the apartments to their designated beneficiaries. Otaibi, who is also the Minister of State for Housing Affairs, added in a

press statement that the government should work on providing more of these unites to citizens covered by the country's housing welfare laws.

The remarks came following a visit to Sabah Al-Ahmad to follow up on the progress of the residential project located in south Kuwait.

Apartments designated for citizens, which include three-bedroom and four-bedroom units are designed according to "modern specifications that meet the needs of the Kuwaiti family", said the statement. An 8.1-million-square-meter area set for investment projects is also being developed, at no cost to the authority in Sabah Al-Ahmad. It includes an industrial area, storage areas, spaces for workshops, a commercial area and a housing project for laborers.

Otaibi was also briefed on another project, which provides government housing for Kuwaitis who sold their homes. He said construction of the project, which includes 1,184 private houses, is witnessing "remarkable progress".

He called on contractors and the authority to commit to the predetermined timelines for the projects and communicate directly any obstacles hindering timely completion.

A meeting on South
Qairawan

Earlier this week, Otaibi called for holding a meeting with all government agencies working on the South Qairawan housing project in order to discuss the measures needed to speed up the project's completion. He said in a statement that the authority will work with the agencies to overcome any obstacles they face as soon as possible, following directives from the Council of Ministers.

The meeting will include the discussion of an estimated cost, as determined by the finance ministry for 2023-2024 fiscal year, of consulting services for the environmental and traffic studies required for the project. Otaibi said that the meeting is an important step towards planning and designing the project for final approval.



Minister Mutlaq Al-Otaibi



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KUWAIT: A group of female students from Kuwait University have come up with a project, called "Unexpire", which aims to solve the problem of food waste. — KUNA photos

Kuwaiti innovators
tackle medical,
food waste issues

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti female innovators are facing head on challenges in the medical and sustainability fields. Kuwaiti Engineer Intisar Al-Shehaimah has won a patent from the US Patent and Trademark Office for making an extractor used in dentistry, Kuwait University announced. The device retrieves splintered parts of files used in treating teeth nerves. Al-Shehaimah, quoted in a statement issued by Kuwait University, said that she made sure that the device would be easy to use, of rapid performance and safe. The mobile device of various sizes is safe for both the patient and the doctor, she affirmed.

Also Thursday, Kuwait University said that a group of female students from the Faculty of Engineering and Petroleum have come up with a project, called 'Unexpire', which aims to solve the problem of food waste and improves people's behavior when it comes to food consumption.

The university explained in a press release

that the idea of the project, which was under the supervision of a faculty member at the Faculty of Engineering and Petroleum Dr Mohamed Al Zayed, serves individuals, supermarkets and the Public Authority for Food and Nutrition, by providing solutions that tackle food waste.

The project is an app that provides proposals to improve food consumption or provide options to make donation digitally. It also creates, analyzes and submits reports to the food and nutrition authority to help develop a future plan based on current consumption behavioral patterns and improve the economic, environmental and food security level in the country.

The project will participate in the INJAZ competition, which will be held at Kuwait Technical College, in order to identify the level of need for such a service and raise awareness of the importance of preserving the Kuwaiti environment. — KUNA



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Erdogan pays homage to Menderes

Kilicdaroglu has focused on more immediate issues as he tries to come from behind

ISTANBUL: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan paid homage to his executed Islamic predecessor on Saturday in a last-gasp attempt to rally his conservative base on the eve of a historic runoff election. Erdogan's visit to Istanbul's Adnan Menderes mausoleum took him back to the man he cited when he called early polls for May 14 in a bid to ease his way to an unprecedented third decade of rule.

Menderes was tried and hanged one year after the military staged a coup in 1960 to put Turkey back on a more secular course. Erdogan survived a putsch attempt against his own Islamic-rooted government in 2016. "The era of coups and juntas is over," the 69-year-old declared after laying a wreath at his mentor's tomb. "I once again call on you to go to the ballot boxes. Tomorrow is a special day for us all."

Erdogan told his followers in January that he wanted to continue Menderes' fight for religious rights and nationalist causes in the officially secular but overwhelmingly Muslim republic of 85 million people. He paid a similarly symbolic visit to Istanbul's iconic Hagia Sophia mosque on the eve of the first round. His conversion of the ancient seat of eastern Christianity into a mosque in 2020 cemented his hero status among poorer and more rural voters who have helped keep him in power since 2003.

Erdogan ended up beating secular opposition leader Kemal Kilicdaroglu by nearly five percentage points two weeks ago. But his failure to top the 50-percent threshold set up Turkey's first runoff Sun-

day and underscored the gradual ebbing of Erdogan's support.

"They are afraid"

Kilicdaroglu has focused on more immediate issues as he tries to come from behind and return power to the secular party that ruled Turkey for most of the 20th century. He used a late-night TV interview on Friday to accuse Erdogan's government of unfairly blocking his mass text messages to voters. "They are afraid of us," the 74-year-old former civil servant said.

Observers say Turkey's votes are free of meddling on election days — but unfair because the odds are stacked against the opposition in advance. "These were competitive but still limited elections," the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) election observer mission's chief Michael Georg Link said after the first round. "The criminalization of some political forces... prevented full political pluralism and impeded individuals' rights to run in the elections," Link said.

Opposition supporter Zerrin Altayli said she thought Kilicdaroglu would win a fairly held vote. "I hope the votes come out of the ballot boxes without any fraud," the 60-year-old said. "If that happens, the results will be different than in the first round."

"Creating fake news"

Erdogan's first decade in power was distinguished by strong economic growth and warm relations with Western powers that elevated his global status and domestic support. His second began with a



ANKARA: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan greets the audience as he attends a meeting of non-governmental organizations (NGO) and mukhtars at Taha Akgul Sports Hall on May 24, 2023. — AFP

corruption scandal and soon descended into a political crackdown and years of economic turmoil that erased many of the early gains. Erdogan's consolidation of power included a near-complete monopolization of the media by the government and its business allies.

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) estimated that Erdogan received 60 times as much airtime on the TRT Haber state broadcaster as Kilicdaroglu in April.

"They have taken over all the institutions," Kilicdaroglu said in his television interview. Erdogan used his own TV appearance Friday to attack Western coverage of the campaign. "They are more interested in the elections in Turkey than in their own countries," Erdogan said. "But they are always creating fake news."

The vote is being accompanied by growing alarm about the fate of Turkey's beleaguered lira and the stability of its

banks. Erdogan forced the central bank to follow through on his unconventional theory that lower interest rates bring down inflation. The exact opposite has occurred. Turkey's annual inflation rate touched 85 percent last year while the lira entered a brief freefall. The lira has been holding remarkably steady this year — a sign the government is ploughing vast sums into market interventions to avoid politically sensitive falls. — AFP

Erdogan is 'family' in conservative heartland of Turkey

BAYBURT, Turkey: Old Fiat cars and yellow tulips dot the eastern Turkish town of Bayburt, the heart of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's ultra-loyal conservative base that is ready to extend his two-decade rule to 2028. Betraying a serene calm hanging over the picturesque province of the same name, Bayburt voters roared into life for Erdogan in the first round of Turkey's presidential election on May 14.

Almost 80 percent of the electors there plumped for Erdogan, his highest vote share in a single province, helping him win 49.5 percent of the national ballot and become a strong favorite in Sunday's

runoff vote. "Getting to know the heart of Bayburt is getting to know Turkey," said Orhan Ates, a newly elected MP for Erdogan's ruling Islamic-rooted AKP party in the parallel parliamentary vote. "Are you ready to re-elect our president?" he asks passers-by, greeting men holding Islamic prayer beads with a knowing nod.

A 47-year-old eye doctor, Ates holds impromptu appointments with patients in the street, issuing a prescription on a crumpled piece of paper to one man wearing worn-out shoes. "I started as a shoe shiner. I became a medicine professor. People see themselves in me, like we see ourselves in Erdogan," whose family originates from neighboring Rize province, Ates told AFP. Erdogan "talks to everyone, not just to the elites", he said.

"We're a big family here and Erdogan is a part of it. He's as solid as our castle," said provincial AKP official Haci Ali Polat, referring to a centuries-old fortress towering over the town. Residents who spoke to

AFP said they stayed faithful to Erdogan because he repelled attacks by foreign powers, just as Bayburt fought Russian invaders in the 19th century. "We are nationalist and conservative and we love Erdogan," enthused Bedirhan Bayen, a 26-year-old university graduate speaking from his father's shop. "What people want is a strong leader," he said, admitting he would have liked a "new face" but judging secular opposition leader Kemal Kilicdaroglu as "weak".

Muhammed Emre Teymur works in the construction industry — a sector that enjoyed an unprecedented boom under Erdogan — and refuses to see Turkey's raging economic crisis as a reason to abandon the president. "Erdogan has produced his own ships, his own weapons, his own planes," said the 19-year-old, who earns 10,000 lira (\$500) a month. "You don't vote for a 'cucumber' due to the price of onions," he added, using a pejorative term to refer to Erdogan's secular challenger Kemal Kilicdaroglu. — AFP



BAYBURT, Turkey: Prof Dr Orhan Ates, newly elected MP of AKP, makes a medical examination of a man during an election campaign visit on May 23, 2023. — AFP



HOUSTON: Dr Suzanne Bell, Lead for NASA's Behavioral Health and Performance Laboratory, walks through a simulated Mars exterior portion of the CHAPEA's Mars Dune Alpha at the Johnson Space center on April 11, 2023. — AFP

Meet the scientist (sort of) spending a year on Mars

WASHINGTON: Living on Mars wasn't exactly a childhood dream for Canadian biologist Kelly Haston, though she'll soon spend a year preparing for just that. "We are just going to pretend that we're there," the 52-year-old told AFP, summing up her participation in an exercise simulating a long stay on the Red Planet. At the end of June, she will be one of the four volunteers stepping into a Martian habitat in Houston, Texas that will be their home for the next 12 months. "It still sometimes seems a bit unreal to me," she laughs.

For NASA, which has carefully selected the participants, these long-term experiments make it possible to evaluate the behavior of a crew in an isolated and confined environment, ahead of a real mission in future. Participants will face equipment failures and water limitations, the space agency has warned — as well as some "surprises," according to Haston.

Their communications with the outside world will suffer from the delays that exist between Earth and Mars —

up to 20 minutes one-way, depending on the planets' positions — and 40 minutes two ways. "I'm very excited about this, but I'm also realistic for what the challenge is," says the research scientist, whose status as a permanent resident of the United States made her eligible for the program.

The habitat, dubbed Mars Dune Alpha, is a 3D printed 160-sq-m facility, complete with bedrooms, a gym, common areas, and a vertical farm to grow food. "It's actually surprisingly spacious feeling when you go inside it," said Haston, who visited last year before her participation was confirmed. "And we do have an outdoor area as well where we will mimic spacewalks or Mars walks."

This area, which is separated by an airlock, is filled with red sand, though it is still covered rather than being open air. The crew will have to don their suits to do "spacewalks" — "probably one of the things that I'm looking forward to the most," says Haston, a registered member of the Mohawk Nation. Haston wasted no time in filling out her application when her partner told her about the opportunity. "It's aligned with many of my goals in life to explore different avenues of research and science, and then also to be a test subject, and to give to a study that will hopefully further space exploration." — AFP

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International

Children in quake-hit Syria learn in buses turned into classrooms

Traveling classrooms service more than 3,000 children at some 27 camps

JINDAYRIS, Syria: In a dusty Syrian camp for earthquake survivors, school pupils line up and wait for a colorful bus to pull up. Since the disaster hit, they go to a classroom on wheels. School bags on their backs and notebooks in hand, the children took off their shoes before entering the bus, then sat down along rows of desks fitted inside. A teacher greeted them in the mobile classroom, decorated with curtains bearing children's designs, before they broke into a song for their English class.

The February 6 quake killed nearly 6,000 people in Syria, many of them in the war-torn country's rebel-held northwest, and also left tens of thousands dead in Turkey. The Syrian town of Jindayris, in Aleppo province near the Turkish border, was among the worst hit, with homes destroyed and school buildings either levelled or turned into shelters.

"We were living in Jindayris and the earthquake happened... and then we didn't have homes anymore," said 10-year-old Jawaher Hilal, a light pink headscarf covering her hair. "We came to live here and the school was very far away," said the fifth-grader now staying with her family at the displacement camp on the outskirts of town. As relief services were set up, she told AFP, "the buses came here and we started

to study and learn. The buses are really nice, they teach us a lot."

The traveling classrooms are a project of the non-profit Orange Organization and service more than 3,000 children at some 27 camps, said education officer Raad Al-Abd. "The mobile classrooms offer educational services as well as psychological support to children who were affected by the quake," he said.

'Desperate conditions'

More than three months after the quake, 3.7 million children in Syria "continue to face desperate conditions and need humanitarian assistance", says the United Nations children's agency UNICEF. "Almost 1.9 million children have had their education disrupted, with many schools still being used as shelters," it added in a statement this month.

In northwest Syria alone, "a minimum of 452 primary and secondary schools" were reportedly damaged to varying degrees, the UN humanitarian agency OCHA said weeks ago. "More than 1 million school-aged children need education support and are at risk of being out of school," it said, adding that at least 25,000 teachers are also in need of help, including "mental health and psychosocial support".

On another bus, boys and girls en-



JINDAYRIS: Pupils board a bus turned into a traveling classroom reaching children left homeless and school-less at a camp for internally displaced persons following a devastating earthquake more than three months ago. — AFP

thusiastically interacted with the teacher, balloons hanging from the ceiling, for lessons that included Arabic, math and science. Outside in the bare dirt, children sang in a circle and clapped along with

the educators. As the buses left, pulling out through the road running between the camps' tents, adjacent structures and trees, the children yelled out and waved goodbye. Jawaher's father Ramadan Hilal

expressed relief and gratitude for the initiative. "After the earthquake there were no more schools or anything else," he said. "Even though they wanted to establish schools, they are far away." — AFP

FBI files uncover plot to kill Queen

LONDON: A newly released cache of FBI files has revealed a potential plot to assassinate Queen Elizabeth II during her 1983 visit to California. The possible threat followed a phone call made by "a man who claimed that his daughter had been killed in Northern Ireland by a rubber bullet", according to the document that also refers to a bar frequented by Irish Republican Army (IRA) sympathizers.

The queen and her husband Prince Philip visited the west coast of the United States in February and

March 1983, and the trip passed off without incident. Four years earlier in 1979, IRA paramilitaries opposed to British rule in Northern Ireland killed Louis Mountbatten, the last colonial governor of India and an uncle of Philip, in a bomb attack.

The file states that the man claimed he was going to attempt to harm the queen "by dropping some object off the Golden Gate Bridge onto the royal yacht Britannia when it sails underneath". Alternatively he "would attempt to kill Queen Elizabeth when she visited Yosemite National Park", they added. A separate file among the documents, dated 1989, pointed out that while the FBI was unaware of any specific threats against the queen, "the possibility of threats against the British monarchy is ever present from the Irish Republican Army". The queen, who died last

September aged 96, has previously been reported to have been the target of other assassination plots.

In 1970, suspected IRA sympathizers unsuccessfully attempted to derail her train west of Sydney, while in 1981 the IRA tried to bomb her on a visit to Shetland, off the northeast coast of Scotland. In the same year, a mentally disturbed teenager fired a single shot towards the queen's car during a visit to New Zealand. Christopher Lewis fired a single shot as she toured the South Island city of Dunedin.

The botched attempt was covered up by police at the time and only came to light in 2018 when New Zealand's Security Intelligence Service (SIS) spy agency released documents following a media request. Also in 1981, another teenager fired six blanks at her during the monarch's Trooping

the Colour birthday parade in central London. The queen quickly calmed her startled horse and carried on while the teenager told soldiers who dismissed him he had "wanted to be famous".

The following year, in one of the most famous security breaches of her reign, Michael Fagan managed to get into the queen's bedroom and spent 10 minutes talking to her before she could raise the alarm. The unemployed decorator had a few drinks and scaled the walls of Buckingham Palace, climbing up a drainpipe to enter the queen's London residence. He wandered into her bedroom and reportedly sat on the end of the bed for a chat with the perturbed monarch before a palace staffer lured him away with the promise of a shot of whisky. — AFP

US cop suspended after shooting 11-year-old boy

WASHINGTON: A police officer in the southern US state of Mississippi has been suspended after shooting an 11-year-old boy while responding to a domestic disturbance. Aderrien Murry, who is black, was shot once in the chest and suffered a collapsed lung, fractured ribs and a lacer-

ated liver, the boy's mother, Nakala Murry, told CNN. Police officials told AFP Friday they are investigating the incident.

Murry said her son, who has since been released from hospital, was shot by an African American police officer, who responded to a domestic violence call from the family on Saturday. Murry said she asked Aderrien to call police after the "irate" father of another one of her children turned up at the family home around 4:00 am.

Murry said an officer arrived with his gun drawn and asked those inside the home to come out. Her son was shot as

he entered the living room with his hands up, she told CNN. "Once he came from around the corner, he got shot," Murry said. "I cannot grasp why." She said her son "kept asking, 'Why did he shoot me? What did I do wrong?'"

The Mississippi Bureau of Investigation told AFP on Friday that it is "currently assessing this critical incident and gathering evidence." "Upon completing the investigation, agents will share their findings with the Attorney General's Office," it said.

Carlos Moore, an attorney for the Murry family, said the police officer, Greg

Capers, has been suspended pending an investigation. "Aderrien Murry is blessed to be home and alive," Moore said in a statement. "No child should ever be subjected to such violence at the hands of those who are sworn to protect and serve." "We cannot continue to tolerate a system that allows police officers to use deadly force with impunity."

Indianola is a predominantly African American town of nearly 10,000 residents in the Mississippi Delta. According to a Washington Post database, 407 people have been shot and killed by police in the United States this year. — AFP



INDIANOLA, Mississippi: Aderrien Murry, 11, is seen with family attorney Carlos Moore after Murry was shot May 20, 2023. — AFP

After mass killings, thousands in need of aid in Nigeria

JOS, Nigeria: Calls for aid increased on Friday for thousands of people displaced by violence that erupted two weeks ago in central Nigeria's Plateau State, killing at least 170 according to a local official. Police gave a lower death toll of 87 and said the situation was calm, in response to reports that tensions remained high after the initial attack on May 15. The crisis is just one of the many security challenges facing President-elect Bola Tinubu who takes the helm of Africa's most populous nation on Monday.

It remains unclear what triggered the attacks in Plateau's Mangu district, but tit-for-tat killings between herders and farmers often spiral into village raids by heavily armed gangs. The National Emergency Management Agency said last week that more than 3,600 people were displaced, over 720 houses partially or completely destroyed and at least 216 people had been injured. On Friday, the Nigerian Red Cross said that at least 1,000 households have fled from their villages. Yohana Danladi, local Red

Cross representative in Plateau State, said that some areas "have not received any support from the government so far, they are just helped by relatives."

After a visit to the area, the UN chief in Nigeria Matthias Schmale said that "affected people and especially women and children are both traumatized and have immediate humanitarian needs such as food, water and dignity/sanitation kits." "While hoping the violence will now end quickly, I urge the concerned authorities to move swiftly to address immediate needs," Schmale told AFP in an email.

Since the initial attack, "almost every day, we still record dead bodies," Mangu district chairman Daput Minister Daniel told AFP. "I cannot give you specific numbers because they increase on daily basis," he said, adding that as of Thursday "the number was above 170". Speaking to AFP on Friday, police spokesman Alfred Alabo could not confirm that death toll.

'We suddenly heard gunshots'

Peter Lagai and Lydia John Hirse were among those who survived and are now sheltering at a school with others. When the attackers stormed his village of Kubat, Lagai said he ran into hiding. "We suddenly heard gunshots... we were so worried," he told AFP, adding that his brother Matthew was shot. "He died instantly. Some of us sustained injuries, the house was burnt down." — AFP

government — to provide safe bike lanes." Municipal Councilmember Fahad Al-Abduljader called on authorities to speed up the process of allocating bicycle lanes in Kuwait, which could help prevent similar accidents. He said the interior ministry, public works ministry and Kuwait Municipality have a shared responsibility to implement bicycle lanes, which have been approved by the Municipal Council. "We cannot stay silent when people's safety is on the line," he said in a statement on Friday.

Bicycle accidents are very common in Kuwait as the country lacks the proper infrastructure for safe cycling, such as bike lanes or bicycle tracks. In 2021, Kuwait banned cycling on Jaber Causeway, a popular destination for bikers in the country, after an accident left one biker dead and another injured.

"The lack of bicycle lanes in Kuwait poses a big challenge for us as cyclists, besides the lack of people's awareness about cyclists' safety and security," Batoul Al-Abdullah, a cyclist who is a member of Bike Mate team, told Kuwait Times last week. "This puts us at high risk of accidents and danger."

Mol: Body of missing citizen...

Continued from Page 1

The suspect initially denied any involvement, but after the body was found, he confessed to hitting Rashidi on the head with a metal object due to personal disputes. He said he then wrapped the body in a carpet and dumped it in Salmi with the help of the Egyptian man. They then burned the tent to destroy any evidence and bloodstains.

The source said investigations went from Kuwait to Egypt with coordination and cooperation with Egyptian authorities to question the Egyptian man who witnessed the crime at the Kabd camp, then helped take the body to the Salmi desert. The source said police arrested the

main suspect one day after Rashidi's disappearance. He denied involvement in the case, but his phone records linked him with the Egyptian, who fled Kuwait after the crime. He said police authorities in Kuwait gave their Egyptian counterparts information about the man, who was arrested within one week by police there.

A police team from Kuwait left for Egypt and questioned the suspect, who confessed and revealed all the details of the gruesome crime. The Egyptian suspect said the main suspect killed the victim with a sharp object at the Kabd camp, then asked him to help in covering the crime, as they burned down the tent, wrapped the body in a carpet, placed it in the suspect's car, took it to the Salmi desert and dumped it in a container, before escaping from the scene. The Egyptian said the main suspect asked him to leave Kuwait, so within 48 hours he left for Egypt. He told Kuwait police about the location of the container, where the decomposed body was found.

Iraq unveils \$17bn project linking...

Continued from Page 1

"We see this project as a pillar of a sustainable non-oil economy, a link that serves Iraq's neighbors and the region, and a contribution to economic integration efforts," Sudani said.

While further discussions are required, any country that wishes "will be able to carry out part of the project", the Iraqi parliament's transport committee said, adding the project could be completed in "three to five years". "The Route of Development will boost interdependence between the countries of the region," Turkey's ambassador to Baghdad Ali Riza Guney said, without elaborating on what role his country would play in the project.

War-ravaged and beset by rampant corruption, oil-rich Iraq suffers from dilapidated infrastructure. Its

roads, riddled with potholes and poorly maintained, are in terrible condition. Those connecting Baghdad to the north cross areas where sporadic attacks are still carried out by remnants of the Islamic State group. Sudan has prioritized the reconstruction of the country's road network, along with upgrading its failing electricity infrastructure.

Developing the road and rail corridor would allow Iraq to capitalize on its geographical position, with the aim of making the country a transportation hub for goods and people moving between the Gulf, Turkey and Europe. Work has already started to increase capacity at the commercial port of Al-Faw, on the shores of the Gulf, where cargo is to be unloaded before it embarks on the new road and rail links. The project also includes the construction of around 15 train stations along the route, including in the major cities of Basra, Baghdad and Mosul, and up to the Turkish border. The Gulf, largely bordered by Iran and Saudi Arabia, is a major shipping zone, especially for the transportation of hydrocarbons extracted by countries of the region. — AFP

Calls for bike lanes after motorist...

Continued from Page 1

Lumocso was cycling with Bike Group Kuwait, a group of around 60 cyclists who are mostly from the Philippines. Cyclists from India had also joined the group on the day of the accident. Lumocso is an avid biker who practices the hobby on an average of four times a week. The group usually organizes a weekly gathering to practice the sport on Gulf Road every Friday at dawn to avoid traffic.

However, Lumocso said reckless driving is too common for them to feel safe, even cycling in the early hours of the morning. "We want support from the government (to provide) bike lanes," he told Kuwait Times. "There are no bike lanes in Kuwait. There are several multinational bike groups in the country, and all of them are making the same appeal to the

International

Pakistan establishment closes ranks in crackdown on Khan

PTI supporters report campaigns of intimidation and influence

ISLAMABAD: With military courts, intimidation of the press and mass arrests, Pakistan's rulers are seeking to destroy former prime minister Imran Khan's support ahead of elections, analysts say. Khan's brief arrest earlier this month sparked days of street protests freighted with anger at the powerful army perceived to have orchestrated his downfall. Islamabad has labelled the violence "anti-state", justifying huge roundups and the revival of army courts to try civilians who targeted government and military buildings.

Journalists, lawyers and activists in Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party report campaigns of intimidation and influence which they blame on the "establishment", a euphemism for the military backing the civilian government. "They want to make it clear to Imran Khan that he can't fight with the establishment," said analyst Hasan Askari. "People are being broken," he told AFP. "By exerting pressure in different ways, they are trying to put the politicians in their place." The military's media wing did not respond to repeated requests for comment by AFP.

Quashing opposition

Since Khan was ousted last year in a parliamentary no-confidence vote, he has levelled unprecedented critique at the military — long-regarded as Pakistan's powerbrokers who analysts say backed his rise to power in 2018. Pakistan's most popular politician has been tangled in dozens of legal cases he claims are fabricated to quash the PTI and bar him from contesting elections due this autumn.

In the days following the protests, more than a dozen of his senior leadership were repeatedly arrested and released on allegations of instigating the violence. In press conferences after being freed, some of his closest aides condemned the violence and announced they were parting ways with Khan. "They have put everyone in jail," Khan complained in an address. "If you say the magic words, 'We are no longer in PTI', then you will be released."

Thousands of rank-and-file supporters have also

been rounded up under the anti-terrorism act. In Khan's power base in the eastern city of Lahore, a grassroots PTI supporter said her son was arrested after protesting peacefully. "It was clear that he had been beaten and was visibly scared," the housewife told AFP on condition of anonymity. "He hasn't set foot outside the house since then. He's received calls from unknown numbers warning him that he's being watched."

Amnesty International said "overly broad and vague anti-terrorism provisions" are being used and "a pall of fear hangs over Khan's supporters following the arbitrary arrests of many opposition leaders". "It is a familiar story. A political party, thinking it can take on the country's all-powerful establishment, crosses a red line and quickly finds itself losing a ruthless, one-sided war of attrition," said an editorial in the Dawn newspaper. "The only way out is to do exactly what you are told."

Censorship

Journalists in Karachi told AFP they were being sent streams of briefings by the army public relations wing targeting Khan's reputation. "We get a lot of smearing news from the 'big brothers' on WhatsApp, which are supposed to be off the record and we are obliged to broadcast without any attribution," a TV reporter said on condition of anonymity, using a euphemism for the army.

Another TV journalist said stories were previously sent to them once or twice a week, but the frequency has now increased to five or six times daily. "We observe self-censorship voluntarily to avoid any nuisance," one more reporter admitted. Reporters Without Borders (RSF) and Amnesty International have said prominent pro-PTI reporter Imran Riaz Khan has been missing since being abducted by military intelligence agencies two weeks ago.

Media has been saturated with pro-army content since Khan's arrest, including a "Martyrs' Day" hastily announced on Thursday, where children showered the graves of slain soldiers with petals and Prime

egg-laying cage, the crocodile attacked the stick, causing him to fall into the enclosure," Mey Savry, police chief of Siem Reap commune, told AFP. "Then other crocodiles pounced, attacking him until he was dead," he said, adding that the remains of Luan Nam's body were covered with bite marks. One of the man's arms was bitten off and swallowed by the crocodiles, he said.

Luan Nam was the president of the local crocodile farmers' association but his family may now sell his stock, after urging him for years to stop raising the reptiles, commune chief May Sameth told AFP. A two-year-old girl was killed and eaten by crocodiles in 2019 when she wandered into her family's reptile farm in the same village, the police chief said. There are a number of crocodile farms around Siem Reap, the gateway city to the famed ruins of Angkor Wat. The reptiles are kept for their eggs, skins and meat as well as the trade in their young. — AFP

Cambodian killed by 40 crocs after falling in enclosure

PHNOM PENH: About 40 crocodiles killed a Cambodian man on Friday after he fell into their enclosure at his family's reptile farm, police said. Luan Nam, 72, was trying to move a crocodile out of a cage where it had laid eggs when it grabbed the stick he was using as a goad and pulled him in. The main group of reptiles then set about him, tearing his body to pieces and leaving the concrete enclosure at the farm in Siem Reap awash with blood. "While he was chasing a crocodile out of an



SIEM REAP: Crocodiles rest at a reptile farm on May 26, 2023 after a 72-year-old man was killed by the animals in the enclosure. — AFP

HK prominent pro-democracy party to disband

HONG KONG: The Civic Party, one of Hong Kong's most prominent pro-democracy groups, voted Saturday to disband due to a leadership vacuum, after its members were squeezed out of local councils and charged under Beijing's national security law. Nicknamed "the barristers' party", it was founded in 2006 by professional elites — mostly from the legal sector — who wanted to promote democratization and civil society in Hong Kong.

The party was among the last few standing opposition groups, as political dissent has been outlawed under 2020's national security law, and civil society in Hong Kong has been forced underground or driven into exile. On Saturday, 30 of 31 members at the party's extraordinary general assembly voted to voluntarily wind up operations — a process that would take about a month to complete.

"After all the final procedures, the Civic Party will disappear from Earth," said chairman Alan Leong. The 65-year-old party co-founder is a well-known pro-democracy figure to Hong Kongers who came of age after the city's 1997 handover from Britain. In 2007, Leong was — and remains — the only candidate that was not pre-screened by China to join the city's chief executive election. This position is

handpicked by Beijing, and he predictably lost. But the party has since its inception aspired to become a "governing" force, instead of pushing back "just for the sake of opposition". At its peak of popularity, the Civic Party was the second-largest group in the city's opposition camp — pocketing six seats in Hong Kong's half-elected legislature in 2012. "We had our eyes fixed on the benchmark of democracy," said Leong in the party's farewell letter to the city on Saturday. "History goes in circles... While the Civic Party has not accomplished what we set out to do, there is a time for everything."

Since 2019 when the financial hub was upended by huge, at times violent pro-democracy protests, a half dozen of the Civic Party's key members have faced criminal convictions for taking part in demonstrations and attempting to raise funds for protesters. They also took part in unofficial political primaries within the pro-democracy camp — which was deemed a national security risk — and four were charged with "conspiracy to subversion". By the end of 2021, the Civic Party lost all five seats in Hong Kong's legislature and more than 30 spots in the democratically elected district councils, as authorities enforced Beijing's "patriots only" doctrine for public offices. Former founding member Albert Lai told AFP the disbanding of the party "can be deemed a symbol of the end of Hong Kong's nativistic democracy movement". "But the failure does not mean the movement was meaningless," Lai said. "Many people were mobilized and much social capital was amassed during the process, which would be meaningful for the next chapter of Hong Kong." — AFP



RAWALPINDI: Activists of ruling party Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) throw shoes at a poster of Pakistan's former Prime Minister Imran Khan and his Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party members on May 27, 2023. — AFP

Minister Shehbaz Sharif framed Khan as an insurgent against law and order. Michael Kugelman, director of the South Asia Institute at the Wilson Center said it was "not a surprise that the army would want to apply a PR blitz". "It's suffered major blows to its popularity and even its credibility because of Khan's anti-army narratives," he added.

Fighting the courts

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has openly criticized the Supreme Court after they ruled Khan's arrest on graft charges illegal and ordered him freed, calling it a "funeral of justice". Supreme Court barrister Gohar Ali Khan — a member of Khan's legal team — said the judiciary was facing an "extraordinary situation". "Police behavior, delaying tactics, and other legal complications purposely created by the au-

thorities are a hindrance in the way of quick justice," he told AFP. The government has meanwhile approved the use of military courts to try protesters accused of damaging military or state buildings during the riots — a power last used to try civilians suspected of militancy. Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said it was "the consequences of Mr Khan's actions". "I believe that if the writ of the state is established, if law takes its course, we will be able to work toward political stability," he told AFP earlier this week.

As the simultaneous confrontations play out between Khan and the army chief, and the government and the judiciary, the former leader is becoming increasingly isolated. "My bottom line view is that the top civilian and military leadership appears to be all in on this goal of dismantling the PTI altogether," said analyst Kugelman. — AFP

Chinese aircraft carrier passes via Taiwan Strait

TAIPEI: Three Chinese ships, including the Shandong aircraft carrier, sailed through the Taiwan Strait on Saturday, which an expert said was an "unusual" display of Beijing's military might during a prolonged period of tensions. China claims self-ruled democratic Taiwan as its territory, and has vowed to take it one day — by force if necessary. Since Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen — who rejects that the island is part of China — was elected in 2016, Beijing has ramped up air and sea incursions around the island. The presence of Chinese warships is constantly monitored and announced near-daily by Taipei, but an aircraft carrier passing through the 180-km-wide Taiwan Strait has not been seen since March 2022. "A (People's Liberation Army Navy) flotilla of 3 ships, led by the Shandong aircraft carrier, passed through the Taiwan Strait around noon today," Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense said in a statement, referring to China's navy.

The flotilla went "to the west of the median line, heading northward", it added, referring to the unofficial border in the middle of the strait which separates the island from continental Asia. Saturday's latest show of force from Beijing comes more than a month after China launched aerial and naval exercises around the island.

During the April war games, Beijing simulated targeted strikes on Taiwan and encirclement of the island, including "sealing" it off, and state media reported dozens of planes had practiced an "aerial blockade". The Shandong also participated in those exercises, with J15 fighter jets deployed from it — though the vessel was not in the Strait, but southeast of Taiwan. The war games were a response to Tsai's meeting with US House Speaker Kevin McCarthy in early April, an encounter Beijing had warned would provoke strong countermeasures. Taiwan's armed forces said Saturday they have deployed air patrol aircraft, navy vessels and land-based missile systems in response to the sail-through. "We are closely monitoring their movements and will respond accordingly," the defense ministry said on Twitter. In recent days, the island has seen an increased presence of Chinese ships and warplane incursions. The ministry said 33 warplanes and 10 vessels were detected in the 24 hours from 6:00 am Saturday. The day before, 11 vessels were near Taiwan's waters.

'General pattern'

Steve Tsang, the director of London-based SOAS China Institute, said sailing the Shandong aircraft carrier through the Taiwan Strait was "very unusual". "But the Chinese have been trying to display their military might around Taiwan in the past six months to a year, so in that context it is fitting into a general pattern," he told AFP. Tsang said it also displayed a "lack of understanding" of modern military warfare. "In the modern era of powerful anti-ship missiles, why would you send a very big ship into a relatively narrow strip of water with limited maneuverability?" he said, adding that the sail-by was "a message".

China has not issued a statement on the passage through the Strait. The last time officials confirmed the Shandong sailed through the Taiwan Strait was in March 2022, right before China's Xi Jinping and US President Joe Biden held a phone call. Before that, the carrier transited in Dec 2020, a day after a US warship had passed through. The Shandong also made a sail-by in Dec 2019, weeks before Taiwanese voters went to the polls. — AFP

Man who opened plane door says he wanted out 'quickly'

SEOUL: A man who opened an emergency exit on an Asiana Airlines flight in mid-air felt "suffocated" and wanted to get off quickly, South Korean police said on Saturday. The plane was carrying nearly 200 passengers as it approached the runway on Friday at Daegu International Airport, about 240 kilometres (149 miles) southeast of Seoul, on a domestic flight.

When the plane was around 200 m above ground, the man who police said was in his 30s without providing further details, opened the exit door. The passenger was taken in by Daegu police for questioning and told officers he had been "under stress after losing a job recently". "He felt the flight was taking longer than it should have been and felt suffocated inside the cabin," a Daegu police detective told AFP. "He wanted out quickly".

The passenger faces up to 10 years in prison for violating aviation safety laws. A video clip shot by a nearby passenger showed wind ripping through the open door, with fabric seatbacks and passengers' hair flapping wildly as some people shouted in surprise. Another video shared on social media showed passengers sitting in the emergency exit row next to an open door being buffeted by strong winds.

A dozen passengers were taken to hospital after experiencing breathing difficulties but there were no major injuries or damage, according to the transport ministry. "It was chaos with people close to the door appearing to faint one by one and flight attendants calling out for doctors on board," a 44-year-old passenger told Yonhap. "I thought the plane was blowing up. I thought I was going to die like this." A transport ministry official told AFP that this was "the first such incident" they were aware of in Korean aviation history. Experts say South Korea's aviation industry has a solid safety record. — AFP



DAEGU, South Korea: An opened door of an Asiana Airlines plane is seen at Daegu International Airport on May 26, 2023, after it was manually opened by a passenger. — AFP

Business

SUNDAY, MAY 28, 2023

What happens if US fails to lift debt limit by June 5?

United States grabbling with a 'X-date' scenario

WASHINGTON: Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen has updated the date for a possible US debt default to June 5 if Congress fails to raise the ceiling on borrowing, pushing back a previous estimate of June 1. This gives negotiators for President Biden and House Republican Speaker Kevin McCarthy a little breathing room as they work to find a bipartisan solution to lift the current spending cap, known as the debt ceiling.

But though murmurs of a possible deal have grown in recent days, no agreement has yet materialized as lawmakers head into the long Memorial Day weekend. With each day that passes, the chance of the United States stumbling into a scenario where it cannot pay all its existing bills - known as the "X-date" - is increasing.

'Hard choices to make'

In mid-January, the US federal government reached its borrowing cap of more than \$31 trillion. Since then, it has used special accounting measures to extend the life of the money it is allowed to spend without raising the borrowing limit. But it can only do so for so long before it runs up against the debt ceiling.

At that point - currently June 5 - it will only be able to spend what it brings in through taxes. Between June 1-15, the Treasury Department will have a funding shortfall of more than \$100 billion, according to Treasury data analysis by

the Bipartisan Policy Center think tank. If the United States hits the debt ceiling, "there will be hard choices to make about what bills go unpaid," Janet Yellen said recently.

With both parties to the negotiations insisting the United States will not default on its debts, that leaves government spending as the place where these hard decisions will have to be made. Treasury could choose to defer certain payments for Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid programs, which help tens of millions of people with pension and healthcare costs. Alternatively, it could pause some payments across the board, which would lessen the impact on Social Security and healthcare recipients, but increase the number of government services affected.

Default 'not an option'

If the Treasury Department makes it to June 15 without defaulting on any of its financial obligations, it may be able to avoid a damaging default in the weeks that follow. Around \$80 billion in revenues are due from quarterly individual and corporate income taxes, according to the Bipartisan Policy Center, far exceeding the \$22 billion that's due to be spent.

This would breathe fresh life into government coffers, keeping Treasury afloat for a little while longer, assuming no significant unexpected outflows of funds are required. But given that tax



WASHINGTON: The US Capitol is seen in Washington, DC. President Joe Biden said he is 'hopeful' for a resolution within hours to the US debt ceiling standoff between Democrats and Republicans, raising hopes of an imminent end to the threat of default by the world's biggest economy. — AFP

revenues consistently bring in less than the government spends, this plan is not a sustainable one. "Default is not an op-

tion, and all responsible lawmakers understand that," the White House said in a recent statement. At some point, Repub-

licans and Democrats will have to reach agreement to lift the debt ceiling, or institute dramatic spending cuts. — AFP

Biden's low profile in debt crisis, failure or a clever strategy?

WASHINGTON: Where's Joe Biden? As the United States teeters on the edge of self-inflicted economic calamity, the question is echoing around Washington. Republicans and Democrats tried frantically on Friday to close a deal ahead of next week's potential US debt default deadline. Biden's schedule, however, featured hosting champion men's and women's college basketball teams at the White House, before heading out for the weekend. So is Biden really missing in action on possibly the biggest economic crisis of his presidency? Or is he a quiet assassin cleverly weaving strategies from behind the scenes?

The jury is out. In Congress, usually loyal Democrats have spent the week complaining to US media that Biden has gone AWOL, that he's failing to bully from the bully pulpit, and that Republican congressional leader, Speaker Kevin McCarthy, is winning the public relations battle. "It's time to bring the president off the bench - or bring somebody off the bench," Politico quoted a disgruntled House Democrat saying. "We have the Oval Office. I've never seen anything like it." Blunter still, another Democratic lawmaker told CNN: "The White House communications strategy is an atrocity."

"Where's the president? Is he in an undisclosed location?" A jet-lagged Biden met with McCarthy in the Oval Office on Monday, right after flying in from the G7 in Japan. Since then, however, he's been either invisible or dealing with other things - like Friday's events with the basketball players. On Thursday, at a ceremony to present an Air Force general as his nominee for chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Biden did give an update on the debt

crisis, but the remarks lasted barely three minutes.

Outplayed by McCarthy?

The shape of a deal reportedly emerging would require significant concessions from the Democrats. They'd bow to Republican demands to limit spending on an array of programs just so that the debt ceiling could get lifted - something done for decades unconditionally. That's something Biden long insisted he did not want to let happen.

Polls also show voters blaming all sides for the mess, ignoring Biden's message that Republicans have been uniquely reckless, taking the economy hostage to force their politically motivated spending cuts. And McCarthy, meanwhile, appears to be flourishing. The Republican speaker's regular television appearances and press conferences contrast starkly with the president's quieter style. Even more surprising, McCarthy had until now been widely seen as having limited clout in his own party, which is dominated by an unruly, hard right wing.

"There are many ways to measure Joe Biden's decline, political and otherwise, but here's one that's unexpected: One of the weakest House speakers in living memory is running rings around him in a high-stakes negotiation," conservative writer Charlie Sykes wrote in The Bulwark. "We'll have to wait a bit to determine whether, in fact, this really is a rout. But it highlights a puzzle and a problem: Why isn't Joe Biden using his bully pulpit?"

Been there, done that

Biden has an answer to that. At 80, with four decades in the Senate and eight years as a vice president, he wants Americans to remember that he knows what he's doing. Even if sometimes that means - in public at least - doing less. Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre calls the strategy a matter of giving the negotiators - members of Congress and White House staffers - "the space and the time."

As for the Republican claim that Biden has been



WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden speaks with reporters before departing from the South Lawn of the White House on Marine One in Washington, DC. Democrats and Republicans inched towards a deal Friday to extend the US debt ceiling and avoid a crippling default that could hit the world's biggest economy within days. — AFP

refusing to engage, that's "a fake narrative," says Ha-keem Jeffries, leader of the Democratic minority in the House of Representatives. Biden has previously pulled major legislative rabbits out of the hat in his two years as president - and then too he adopted his largely behind-the-scenes role. So he may yet have the last laugh. Some see his ceding of the spotlight to McCarthy not as a sign of weakness but a clever way to flatter the recently installed speaker.

Even the Friday basketball event at the White House included evidence of Biden's soft power approach: among the sports-mad audience was one of his main negotiators, Shalanda Young and also top Republican negotiator Garret Graves. Biden says he has no regrets. "I've done my part," he told reporters last week. But he said he also accepts the difficult reality of politics. Even if "on the merits" he would be "blameless" for a default, "presidents are responsible for everything," he said. — AFP

BA cancels dozens of Heathrow flights

LONDON: London's Heathrow airport was hit by disruptions Friday as UK's flag carrier airline British Airways cancelled dozens of flights over the course of two days following a technical issue. The cancellations come ahead of a long weekend with a public holiday on Monday and half-term school holiday. BA said the "vast majority" of its flights were operating on Friday after it cancelled "some of our short-haul flights from Heathrow due to the knock-on effect of a technical issue that we experienced" on Thursday. Heathrow said on its website that "following a technical issue resolved overnight, there may still be cancellations or delays to arriving and departing British Airways flights" on Friday.

According to aviation analytics company Cirium, 175 flights were cancelled over the course of Thursday and Friday, leaving thousands of travelers affected. Heathrow also said that a security guards strike at its Terminal 5 this weekend "may cause disruption to the travel plans of some passengers". The RAC motoring organization predicted the busiest late May bank holiday on the roads since 2019, with more than 19 million leisure car trips expected over the long weekend. — AFP



HOUSTON: Photo shows a British Airways Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner aircraft moving on the runway at George Bush International Airport (IAH) in Houston Texas. — AFP

Oil majors go slow on green transition despite pressure

PARIS: Most oil majors are stepping up investments in green energy but they are facing a barrage of recriminations and protests from activists for their refusal to completely forsake fossil fuels. Campaigners again used a series of shareholder meetings in the past month to make their anger known and push energy firms to do more to shift towards solar, wind and other cleaner projects.

In the latest action, hundreds of protesters tried to block the gathering of France's TotalEnergies in Paris on Friday, prompting police to use tear gas to disperse some who sat in front of the venue. Earlier this week in London, protesters demonstrated outside Shell's annual general meeting. Inside, activists interrupted the opening remarks of CEO Wael Sawan while others tried to take the stage. Late last month, activists from Fossil Free London disrupted the speeches of BP's chairman and CEO.

Groups of investors are also demanding change - even the Church of England's pensions board has weighed in, deciding to join others in voting against Shell's "green" transition plan and demanding more ambitious carbon-cutting targets. Since 2021 the International Energy Agency (IEA) has called for a stop to new oil projects so the world meets the goal of keeping global temperatures to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. But new oil fields are still opening as energy firms say they must meet the unabated demand for the fossil fuel.

"Climate is at the heart of our concerns," TotalEnergies CEO Patrick Pouyanné told Friday's shareholder meeting as he spoke behind a plexiglass that was put up for the occasion. He said his group has done more than others to invest in renewables but that world oil demand is growing and "if TotalEnergies doesn't respond to this demand, others will do it for us". Shareholders later voted overwhelmingly in favor of the company's climate strategy, though 30 percent backed a non-binding resolution from activist investors calling for more ambitious emissions targets.

'Tiny' investment

Oil and gas groups - which posted huge prof-

its last year - have set objectives to reduce emissions but their investments in renewable energy and carbon capture remain a marginal amount of their overall spending. According to the IEA, such spending rose from one percent in 2020 to five percent of total expenditures by last year, still only representing a quarter of what energy firms paid out to shareholders. European firms such as TotalEnergies and Equinor are doing better than their peers, but "their investment in clean energy is tiny compared to their capital expenditure on oil and gas expansion", said David Tong, global industry campaign manager at Oil Change International.

Other than renewables and carbon capture, energy firms also have expertise that could be put to use in the production of hydrogen, biogas, ethanol and low-carbon fuels, said Christophe McGlade, head of the IEA's energy supply unit. "If they can direct more of their spending towards those technologies, that could really move the needle in terms of getting them to scale up, and getting the deployment levels we need to get on track with net zero," he said.

Reaching net zero

The emissions reduction efforts made by energy majors have concerned mostly their own op-

erations, which represent only about 15 percent of their overall carbon footprint. They have in particular been battling against methane leaks and reduced the burning of unwanted natural gas at oil fields.

Such measures have helped BP reduce its emissions by 41 percent from 2019 to 2022, and it has upped its 2030 target to a 50 percent reduction. Even US oil majors, which have long resisted recognizing the need to reduce emissions, have begun to do so. ExxonMobil plans to cut its proper emissions by a fifth by 2030, from 2016 levels. But the bulk of the work is elsewhere: reducing the climate impact from its products as they are burned in cars or furnaces - indirect emissions that account for 85 percent of the sector's overall carbon footprint.

Yet oil and gas firms are not cutting investment in fossil fuel exploration and production. The IEA forecasts that it will rise this year to hit the 2019 pre-pandemic level. BP announced earlier this year knocked back its emissions reduction plans. Instead of a 35-40 percent drop in indirect emissions linked to its production by 2030, BP now targets a 20-30 percent reduction. "If companies are banking on continued increases in oil and gas demand, they are implicitly assuming that we will not reach our net zero targets and not limit climate change," McGlade said. — AFP

TotalEnergies shareholders back climate strategy despite protests

Protesters try to prevent investors from attending general assembly

PARIS: TotalEnergies shareholders have backed the French oil giant's climate strategy as it faces pressure from both environment activists and the government to speed up its switch to renewable energy. Protesters tried to prevent investors from attending the group's annual general assembly in Paris, but police early in the morning used tear gas to disperse those who had managed to sit in front of the concert hall where it was being held. The demonstration was one of the latest in a series of tumultuous shareholder meetings at major corporations in Europe as activists step up pressure on companies to reduce their carbon footprints.

After three hours of debate, TotalEnergies investors attending the gathering online or in person backed the group's climate strategy with more than 88 percent of votes. Nearly a third of shareholders supported a motion from a minority of investors for the oil giant to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions to help meet the 2015 Paris accord's goal of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. That motion was put forward by Follow This, a group of 17 investors who together hold almost 1.5 percent of shares, but had been rejected by the oil giant.

Follow This representative Tarek Bouhouch had urged investors to support the motion to avoid "a climate collapse". TotalEnergies chief executive Patrick Pouyanne earlier defended the company's climate strategy in front of a few hundred people in the French capital's Salle Pleyel. "The climate is at the heart of our concerns," he said. He said his group has done more than others to invest in renewables. But world oil demand is growing and "if TotalEnergies doesn't respond to this demand, others will do it for us", he said.

'Go faster'

Despite police blocking off the road outside the

venue, a couple of hundred protesters had remained outside the concert hall as the meeting kicked off. "All we want is to knock down Total," protesters chanted. In reference to rising global temperatures, they also bellowed: "One, two and three degrees, we have Total to thank". Some poured a black liquid over their heads.

The company wanted to avoid the chaos of last year when activists prevented some shareholders from attending the annual meeting. This year, the firm placed two-meter high plexiglass screens to separate off speakers on stage from members of the public at the concert hall. It also forbade attendees and journalists from using their smartphones inside the venue. Climate campaigners are growing impatient with oil majors and other companies over their impact on the planet. Energy giants posted record profits last year as Russia's war in Ukraine sent oil and gas prices soaring.

In Switzerland on Friday, shareholders of Swiss commodities giant Glencore sought to hold the company accountable over its coal strategy. During the annual shareholders' meeting of British group Shell on Tuesday, activists sang "Go to hell Shell!" TotalEnergies plans to allocate a third of its investments in low-carbon sources of energy and reach 100 gigawatts of renewable electricity capacity by 2030. But France's energy transition minister, Agnes Pannier-Runacher, urged the company to speed things up on Friday. "Total invests in renewable energies, but the challenge is to go faster, stronger and above all faster," she told FranceInfo radio.

'The worst'

Marie Cohuet, spokeswoman for climate campaigners Alternatiba, said TotalEnergies "embodies the worst of what is done in terms of the exploitation of people and the planet". One shareholder, who



PARIS: A climate protester is being evacuated by French gendarmes during a demonstration on the outskirts of the Paris venue for TotalEnergies Annual General Meeting in Paris on May 26, 2023. — AFP

gave his name as Jean-Paul, defended himself as he made his way in to the Paris meeting. "We are all concerned by climate issues, but there are also economic aspects, employment," he said.

TotalEnergies operations include liquefied natural gas and oil projects in the United Arab Emirates, Iraq, Papua New Guinea and Uganda, where it has come

under fire for a pipeline project activists say threatens a fragile ecosystem and livelihoods. The French giant has also sparked controversy over posting a record net profit of \$20.5 billion for last year, how much taxes it pays in France, and how much it pays Pouyanne. A 10-percent hike to his salary was approved at Friday's meeting. — AFP

UK says priority is fighting inflation

LONDON: British finance minister Jeremy Hunt stressed that his Conservative government's priority was tackling high inflation, even at the expense of a recession. With Britons facing a cost-of-living crisis, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has vowed to halve UK inflation this year - although much is down to central bank policy and market forces.

"It is a big task, but we must deliver it and we will even if it means precipitating a recession," Hunt told Sky News in reference to Sunak's pledge. He added: "In the end, inflation is a source of instability, and if we want to have prosperity, if we want to grow the economy... we have to support the Bank of England in the difficult decisions that they take." The BoE this month lifted its key interest rate to 4.50 percent, its 12th increase in a row as it seeks to dampen inflation, but risks worsening the squeeze on living standards.

Retail lenders tend to match the central bank's increases to borrowing costs, sparking higher loan repayments and denting economic activity. Data showed this week UK inflation slowed to a 13-month low in April, but remains elevated at 8.7 percent as soaring food prices offset weaker energy costs. The rate is still more than four times the BoE's official 2.0-percent target. Core inflation - which is also closely watched by the BoE and strips out volatile energy and food costs - accelerated to 6.8 percent or the highest since 1992.

That cemented expectations of another BoE interest-rate hike, with some investors predicting it could reach 5.5 percent by year-end. The news sent the UK government's long-term borrowing costs higher. The yield on the 10-year UK government bond rose Friday to 4.383 percent. It had spiked to almost 4.64 percent in October following unfunded tax cuts that sank the short-lived administration of Sunak's predecessor Liz Truss. Over the past year, Britain has been plagued by strikes as high inflation erodes the value of wages. — AFP



NBK named 'Best Bank in Kuwait'

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) was named "Best Bank in Kuwait" for 2023 by Global Finance, in its annual survey for the Best Banks in the Middle East, based on the input from a large panel of experts, analysts, corporate financial executives, bankers and banking consultants worldwide. Global Finance mentioned that this year's Awards recognize the financial institutions that offer the broadest range of services as well as the reliability required for long-term financial relationships.

In selecting NBK as Best Bank in Kuwait, Global Finance relied on a set of criteria including: growth in assets, profitability, geographic reach, strategic relationships, new business development and innovation in products. Global Finance, founded in 1987 and headquartered in New York, is one of the most reputable magazines specialized in finance and economics. It has a circulation of 50,000 readers in 193 countries worldwide, including senior corporate and financial officers responsible for making investment and strategic decisions at multinational companies and financial institutions.

The magazine conducts various surveys annually about innovation and profitability for banks and financial institutions all over the world, based on which it selects top performers on the regional and international levels. National Bank of Kuwait is regarded as the top financial institution in Ku-



wait with actual predominance among commercial banks' sector.

It is consistently awarded one of the highest credit ratings among all banks of the Middle East, collectively from the Big 3 Credit Rating Agencies: Moody's, Fitch and Standard & Poor's. NBK also stands out in terms of broad local and global network, including branches, subsidiaries and representative offices across key financial hubs worldwide including China, Geneva, London, Paris, New York, and Singapore, as well as its regional presence in Lebanon, Egypt, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and the UAE.

OpenAI chief seeks to calm fears on job losses

PARIS: The boss of OpenAI, the firm behind the massively popular ChatGPT bot, said on Friday that his firm's technology would not destroy the job market as he sought to calm fears about the march of artificial intelligence (AI). Sam Altman, on a global tour to charm national leaders and powerbrokers, said in Paris that AI would not - as some have warned - wipe out whole sectors of the workforce through automation. "This idea that AI is going to progress to a point where humans don't have any work to do or don't have any purpose has never resonated with me," he said.

Asked about the media industry, where several

outlets already use AI to generate stories, Altman said ChatGPT should instead be like giving a journalist 100 assistants to help them research and come up with ideas. ChatGPT burst into the spotlight late last year, demonstrating an ability to generate essays, poems and conversations from the briefest of prompts. Microsoft later laid out billions of dollars to support OpenAI and now uses the firm's technology in several of its products - sparking a race with Google, which has made a slew of similar announcements.

Altman, a 38-year-old emerging star of Silicon Valley, has received rapturous welcomes from leaders everywhere from Lagos to London. Though earlier this week, he seemed to annoy the European Union by hinting that his firm could leave the bloc if they regulate too severely. He insisted to a group of journalists on the sidelines of the Paris event that the headlines were not fair and he had no intention of leaving the bloc - rather, OpenAI was likely to open an office in Europe in the future. — AFP



LONDON: People from different campaign groups gather in Parliament Square, central London, on May 27, 2023 for the 'Not My Bill' protest to demonstrate against government's anti-protest laws, anti-strike laws, anti-traveler laws and the illegal migration bill. — AFP

IMF slightly lifts US 2023 forecast

WASHINGTON: The International Monetary Fund slightly raised its forecast for 2023 US economic growth Friday while noting that a slowing economy will likely lead to a small increase in unemployment in 2024. "The US economy has proven resilient," IMF managing director Kristalina Georgieva said in a press conference, shortly after the updated figures were released. Georgieva also sounded a warning about the ongoing stalemate in the United States over raising borrowing limits before a June 1 deadline, and called for Republicans and Democrats in Congress to come to a "speedy resolution."

"We think of the US Treasury market as an anchor for the global financial system, and this anchor needs to hold," she said. Real GDP growth in the United States is expected to rise by 1.7 percent this year, up from 1.6 percent forecast earlier this year, before slowing to 1.0 percent in 2024, the IMF said in a statement. The US unemployment rate, which is currently at near-record lows, is expected to tick up slightly, with "slowing, but still-solid, growth" pushing it to increase to 4.4 percent by the end of next year, the IMF statement said.

The IMF's new US forecast follows recent data which indicates a resilient economy in spite of an aggressive campaign of interest-rate hikes to counter high inflation by the US Federal Reserve, and recent stresses in the banking sector. Addressing inflation, Georgieva said resilient demand and a strong labor

market had been "something of a double-edged sword" for the US economy. "They have been certainly a boost to American families, but they have also contributed to more persistent inflation than had been anticipated," she said.

The IMF now expects inflation to remain stubbornly above-target into 2025. As a result, Georgieva said, the Fed's job of raising interest rates "is not quite yet done." Interest rates "will need to be somewhat higher for longer," if the Fed is to successfully bring inflation back down to its long-term target of two percent, she said. The IMF's forecast indicates that the Fed's benchmark lending rate needs to rise by at least another 25 basis points to finish the year at 5.4 percent, and then stay there well into next year. — AFP



AUSTIN: A family waits for their luggage at the Austin-Bergstrom International Airport on May 26, 2023 in Austin, Texas. Millions of Americans are expected to travel this Memorial Day Weekend as gas has become a dollar cheaper than last year. — AFP

US and China wrangle on trade in rare talks

Washington, Beijing keep lines of communication open

WASHINGTON: The United States and China sparred over trade issues but promised to keep lines of communication open as Beijing's commerce minister paid a rare visit after a period of soaring tensions. Minister Wang Wentao met US Trade Representative Katherine Tai on the sidelines of an Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation trade meeting in Detroit, a day after he saw his counterpart Gina Raimondo in Washington. Tai "discussed the importance of the US-China trade relationship in the global economy and the need for both sides to continue engaging with one another," her office said in a statement.

China's state-run Xinhua agency said that the meeting in Detroit was "candid, pragmatic and in-depth." It said Wang raised concern about US trade policies as well as on Taiwan, the self-ruling democracy which Beijing claims and has not ruled out taking by force. Both Tai and Raimondo in turn voiced concern about China's actions against US companies. China recently restricted purchases from US chip giant Micron, citing security risks.

The move was widely interpreted as retaliation after President Joe Biden imposed a sweeping ban on China's access to US advanced semiconductors, fearing that Beijing will put them to military use and dominate the global market for emerging technologies. It was one

of the first visits by a high-ranking Chinese official since Biden took office, although the environment minister traveled to Washington last year. High-level dialogue ground to a halt during the COVID-19 pandemic as Chinese officials stayed home and Biden's predecessor Donald Trump sharply raised the tone against Beijing, including over the virus.

Biden met in November with Chinese President Xi Jinping in Bali with the two leaders both saying that they would work to keep tensions in check. But the United States erupted in outrage in February after spotting what US officials said was a Chinese surveillance drone over US soil, with Secretary of State Antony Blinken calling off a visit to Beijing. In the most substantive attempt to restore communication, Biden's national security advisor, Jake Sullivan, met in Vienna earlier this month with top Chinese diplomat Wang Yi.

China's new ambassador to Washington, Xie Feng, also met Thursday with the State Department's third highest-ranking official, Victoria Nuland. Xie, speaking on his arrival in Washington this week, said there were "profound differences" between the two countries. "This relationship has gone through many twists and turns in the past half century, yet it has always been able to move ahead. The relationship is too important for us to let it fail," he said. — AFP



DETROIT: Members of the People's Republic of China delegation at the table before the APEC Ministers Responsible for Trade meeting in Detroit, Michigan. — AFP

Gulf Bank launches a special offer for customers

KUWAIT: As we begin to welcome the summer season, Gulf Bank, in collaboration with Visa, launches a special offer that gives 60 customers a chance to win an Apple Watch Ultra or an iPhone 14 Pro device. Gulf Bank has announced that the promotion period will run from May 21 to June 30, 2023, and the 60 winners will be announced on July 10, 2023, under the supervision of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

This offer is valid only for Gulf Bank Visa credit cardholders, and on payments that are made using their phones or smart watches during the offer period. Customers get one chance to win for every KD 10 spent in Kuwait, and three chances to win for every KD 10 spent internationally. On this occasion, Gulf Bank's Assistant General Manager of Consumer Banking, Mohammed Taqi, said that "Gulf Bank is keen to reward its customers and meet their requirements. This is part of the bank's continuous efforts to provide the best products and services, as well as an outstanding customer experience."

Taqi mentioned that Gulf Bank's credit cards have many features that customers can benefit from – as these cards provide customers with many offers in various sectors, including restaurants, hotels, travel and tourism, entertainment, health and beauty, car rentals, and many others. Gulf Bank offers its customers the best and fastest rewards program in Kuwait, which enables customers to redeem points for tickets on all airlines and make hotel reservations at more than 300,000 hotels around the world.

The Gulf Points program provides customers with many benefits, including: the opportunity to travel anytime, and anywhere throughout the year, to earn miles when redeeming points from their favorite airline and to gain additional points when paying the remaining value of their reservation. Other benefits also include automatic entry into the program for all Gulf Bank credit card holders, with no minimum payment required to earn points and redeem them for free tickets on all airlines.

Gulf Bank's vision is to be the leading Kuwaiti Bank of the Future. The Bank is constantly engaging and empowering its employees as part of an inclusive and diversified workplace in recognition of every employee's role in delivering customer excellence and serving the community at large. With its extensive network of branches and innovative digital services, Gulf Bank is able to give its customers the choice of how and where to conduct their banking transactions, all while ensuring a simple and seamless banking experience.

Gulf Bank is committed to maintaining robust developments in sustainability at environmental, social and governance levels through diverse sustainability initiatives, strategically selected to benefit the Bank both internally and externally. Gulf Bank supports Kuwait Vision 2035 "New Kuwait" and works with various parties to achieve it.



Mohammed Taqi

Travel industry looks to Chinese tourists

DOHA: The return of Chinese tourists to destinations worldwide will top off a spectacular post-coronavirus global tourism revival this year, according to industry leaders. Jet makers, airline executives and hotel tycoons at this week's Qatar Economic Forum spoke of an apparently insatiable demand for travel. Chinese tourists, now unshackled from COVID-19 restrictions, will complete the boom, they said.

"The desire to travel has never been greater and the industry is struggling how to respond to that demand," said Boeing chairman David Calhoun as he told of the aviation giant's battle to meet demand for jets. Leisure travel has overtaken business as the main reason for taking a plane or booking a room, according to Sebastien Bazin, head of Accor, Europe's biggest hotel group.

The northern hemisphere summer travel season is expected to send airline traffic back to levels last seen before the pandemic erupted in December 2019. Executives said China's free-spending tourists will play a key role in the revival, while putting new pressure on the travel industry. Hotel group Accor has predicted that "millions" of Chinese could boost travel industry coffers in coming months. Akbar Al-Baker, Qatar Airways' chief executive, said all of its planes leaving China are "absolutely packed".

"Not only are they paying the fares that I am asking due to the lack of capacity available to them, but also the amount of money they spend in our duty

free (at Doha) airport is more than any other nationality," he added. William Ellwood Heinecke, the billionaire Thai-American owner of the Minor International hospitality group, said that in the first quarter of 2023 the number of Chinese tourists in Thailand was 85 percent lower than in 2019. "I think we are definitely in rebound, but more importantly we haven't seen China come back yet," he said, predicting the boom would be completed in the second half.

'Strange position'

Tony Fernandes, a Malaysian tycoon whose conglomerate includes the AirAsia budget carrier, said he hoped to have all 250 planes in his fleet, which were grounded during COVID-19, running again by August. "We are in a strange position where one minute we were fighting for survival, then restarting 200 planes which is a massive job."

Earlier this month, Dubai-based Emirates Group announced record full-year profits of three billion dollars, trumpeting a "full recovery" from the pandemic. Fernandes said airline and credit card data indicated that leisure travel was now a key consumer priority. Bazin said his group's 5,400 hotels had seen a "total shift" in travel habits. For decades, big hotel chains had two-thirds business customers and one-third leisure. "Now that mix is probably going to be reversed. We are already 55 percent leisure and 45 percent business," Bazin said, describing a "remote working" revolution.

Twice a month, a new class of tourist leaves home on a Wednesday night, travels for less than three hours and only returns the following Tuesday, he said. "That means that on Thursday and Friday and



PINGTAN: A Chinese tourist poses for photos with an installation depicting Taiwan and mainland China at a tourist area on Pingtan island, the closest point to Taiwan, in China's southeast Fujian province. — AFP

Monday, they work remotely." The industry could not assess how much is leisure and how much business, Fernandes said. Hotel and airline owners defended the higher prices they are now charging. "We have been through two years of hell," said Bazin, noting fares for luxury rooms are about 33-35 percent higher than 2019, while economy rooms are 10-12 percent higher.

The hotel industry had to recoup billions in lost revenues, he said, while it was now more difficult to find and keep staff. "We are not taking advantage of people," said Bazin. "Anyone using low interest rates, low labor costs and low energy prices to make their model work - it ain't going to work any more," added Ellwood Heinecke. Travelers are now paying a "sensible price" for plane tickets, Fernandes insisted. — AFP

Global stocks climb on debt deal hopes

NEW YORK: Global stock markets advanced on hopes of progress in negotiations to avert a calamitous US debt default and a continued rally in tech stocks over enthusiasm for firms involved in artificial intelligence. On Wall Street, the broad-based S&P 500 rose 1.3 percent to 4,205.45, while the Dow Jones Industrial Average posted a more modest 1.0 percent gain to finish the week at 33,093.34.

"The market is rising on the hope that they probably will be announcing very soon that we avert the default," Peter Cardillo from Spartan Capital Securities told AFP, referring to the negotiations between the White House and Republicans in Congress. The Nasdaq soared to finish the day up 2.2 percent at 12,975.69, fueled by a continued rally in stocks like Nvidia which stand to benefit from the widespread adoption of AI tools.

European stocks closed with solid gains and most Asian markets finishing the day higher. According to unconfirmed US media reports, the debt limit would be suspended for two years, while limits would be placed on social spending. On Thursday, the US president reiterated his pledge that "there will be no default" despite the wrangling, adding that talks with McCarthy, who leads the Republican negotiators, had been "productive".

Pressure for a deal was ramped up after Fitch placed the country's AAA-ranked credit on "rating watch negative" owing to the standoff. Shortly after the US stock markets had closed Friday, US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen published a letter sent to Congressional leaders warning of a possible US debt default on June 5 if they fail to raise the debt limit, four days later than a previous estimate of June 1.

In another source of concern, data showed the US Federal Reserve's preferred measure of inflation



NEW YORK: Traders work the floor of the New York Stock Exchange in New York City. — AFP

– the personal consumption expenditures (PCE) index – rose 4.4 percent year-on-year in April, up from 4.2 percent a month earlier. The core index, excluding volatile food and energy prices, also rose, as did personal income and spending.

The data "will give the Fed some pause about pausing its rate hikes in June," said Briefing.com analyst Patrick O'Hare. Earlier this month, the Fed signaled it will take a "data dependent" approach as to whether it needs to hike interest rates further to squash inflation, with markets hoping for a pause in interest rates. Asian markets mostly rose on Friday, with Tokyo leading the way thanks to a weaker yen and softer inflation that had traders betting the

'Window to the future'

The technology known as FACE (Free Air CO2 Enrichment) has already been used to study the impact on forests in Australia, the United States and the United Kingdom, but never in a tropical rainforest. By 2024, there will be six "carbon rings" pumping CO2 – one of the causes of global warming – at a concentration 40 percent to 50 percent higher than today. Over a decade, researchers will analyze the processes occurring in leaves, roots, soil, water and nutrient cycles.

"We will have more accurate projections on how the Amazon rainforest can help combat climate change with its ability to absorb carbon from the atmosphere. Also, it will help us understand how the rainforest will be impact-

ed by these changes," says David Lapola, a researcher at the University of Campinas, who coordinates the project with Quesada. The carbon increase in the atmosphere may lead to creation of grassy plains, or savanna, where Amazon rainforest once flourished, with vegetation better adapted to higher temperatures and longer droughts.

But CO2 could also "fertilize" the forest and make it temporarily more resistant to these changes. "This is a positive scenario, at least for a short time, a period for us to get to zero emission policies, to keep temperature increases to only 1.5 degrees Centigrade," Quesada says. The project "is a window to the future. You open the window and look at what might be happening 30 years ahead," he says. — AFP

Scientists simulate how warming may impact Amazon

MANAUS: Deep in the Amazon, an experiment unfolds that may allow a peek into the future to see what will happen to the world's largest rainforest when carbon dioxide levels rise. It is a simulation to see how the lungs of the world will endure global warming. The AmazonFACE project, co-financed by Brazil and the Unit-

ed Kingdom, is "an open-air laboratory that will allow us to understand how the rainforest will behave in future climate change scenarios," says Carlos Quesada, one of the project coordinators.

Quesada stands at the foot of a soaring metal tower that protrudes through the rainforest canopy at a site 50 miles north of Manaus in northwest Brazil. Sixteen other towers arranged in a circle around it will "pump" CO2 into the ring, replicating levels that may happen with global warming. "How will the rainforest react to the rising temperature, the reduction in water availability, in a world with more carbon in the atmosphere?" asks Quesada, a researcher at an Amazon research institute that is part of the Brazilian Ministry of Science and Technology.

Lifestyle



Lina Bakir Music Academy holds candlelight concerts at Abdullah Al-Salem Cultural Center

By Abdellatif Sharaa

Lina Bakir Music Academy held candlelight concerts at Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Cultural Center theater that included four performances, one on Thursday and three on Friday. The night was amazing as children as young as three let their tender fingers run over the piano keys as an orchestra played in the background.



Lina Bakir Music Academy students who performed at a concert at Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Cultural Center theater. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

The event by advanced students on Thursday was for a private audience, where a young child came on stage and played. "I have put an amazing child who is three years old to showcase that we are the only academy that takes them at this age and we are able to train them to perform with an orchestra," Academy President Lina Bakir said. The performance also included a 4-year-old and 6-year-old, while the other performers were advanced students.

Bakir said a few days earlier, the academy produced the youngest Kuwaiti, who at 4 years old won the first prize at an international event. "Music teaches you everything. It really does wonders. Kids can take anything you give them and we see the results as we work with them," Bakir said. She said this is the first time in her history of teaching that she is holding concerts back-to-back. Three concerts were held on Friday, the first for toddlers, the second for interme-

diates and the third for advanced students. Bakir said parents' cooperation is amazing and they love to see their children grow with the academy. "Parents crave and want these things to happen. They hope the doors will be open for many more to come," Bakir said, adding "we have huge numbers on the waiting list and look forward to having more teachers".



'So sorry': Celine Dion cancels 2023-2024 shows over health

Pop icon Celine Dion on Friday cancelled all her remaining shows scheduled for 2023-2024, saying she was not strong enough to tour as she battles a rare neurological disorder. The 55-year-old Canadian revealed last year that her condition - Stiff-Person Syndrome - was affecting her singing. "I'm so sorry to disappoint all of you once again... and even though it breaks my heart, it's best that we cancel everything until I'm really ready to be back on stage," the "My Heart Will Go On" singer tweeted. "I'm not giving up... and I can't wait to see you again!" she added. A state-

ment released by her tour said: "With a sense of tremendous disappointment, Celine Dion's Courage World Tour today announced the cancellation of all remaining dates currently on sale for 2023 and 2024." "I'm working really hard to build back my strength, but touring can be very difficult even when you're 100 percent," Dion said in her statement, which was also posted on Instagram. Dion, one of the top women singers with an octave-busting voice, is the author of hits like "Because You Loved Me", "My Heart Will Go On" and "Think Twice". In December 2022, she posted a tearful video on Instagram to say she had recently been diagnosed with Stiff-Person Syndrome and would not be ready to start her European tour in February as planned. She said the disorder was causing muscle spasms and was "not allowing me to use my vocal cords to sing the way I'm used to". Sufferers commonly experience stiff muscles in the torso,

arms and legs, with noise or emotional distress known to trigger spasms. The cancellations will affect her 16-country tour in Europe which was due to start in Amsterdam in August and conclude with two dates at the O2 arena in London in April next year. Tickets purchased for the cancelled dates will be refunded via their original point of sale, her website said. **Disappointed fans** Her "Courage World Tour" began in 2019, and Dion completed 52 shows before the COVID-19 pandemic put the remainder on hold. She later cancelled the North American section of the tour due to her health problems. The dates in Europe were to have been the Grammy-winning singer's first global concert tour in a decade and the first without her husband-manager Rene Angelil, who died from cancer in 2016. Fans online reacted with disappointment, but wished Dion well.

"Not surprising, but no less sad. Courage to you Celine, we are with you," wrote fan information account @LesRedHeads. "You don't have to apologize queen! Take care of yourself. Your health

should take number one priority," wrote @notaerz. Dion had sparked hopes of a recovery when she released a new album "Love Again" last month, the soundtrack for a film of the same name, which contained five new songs as well as past hits. The youngest of 14 children, Dion was born in Quebec, Canada and got her start at 12, when her mother sent a recording of her to Angelil, who mortgaged his own home to finance her first album. She began singing in French, but started belting out hits in English after taking English lessons in the 1980s. She gained worldwide fame in 1997 with "My Heart Will Go On", the theme to James Cameron's epic film "Titanic". She parlayed that success into a regular gig at Caesar's Palace in Las Vegas, playing for audiences night after night for 16 years, with only a few breaks. — AFP



In this file photo Canadian singer Celine Dion arrives for the Alexandre Vauthier Women's Fall-Winter 2019/2020 Haute Couture collection fashion show in Paris.

Lifestyle

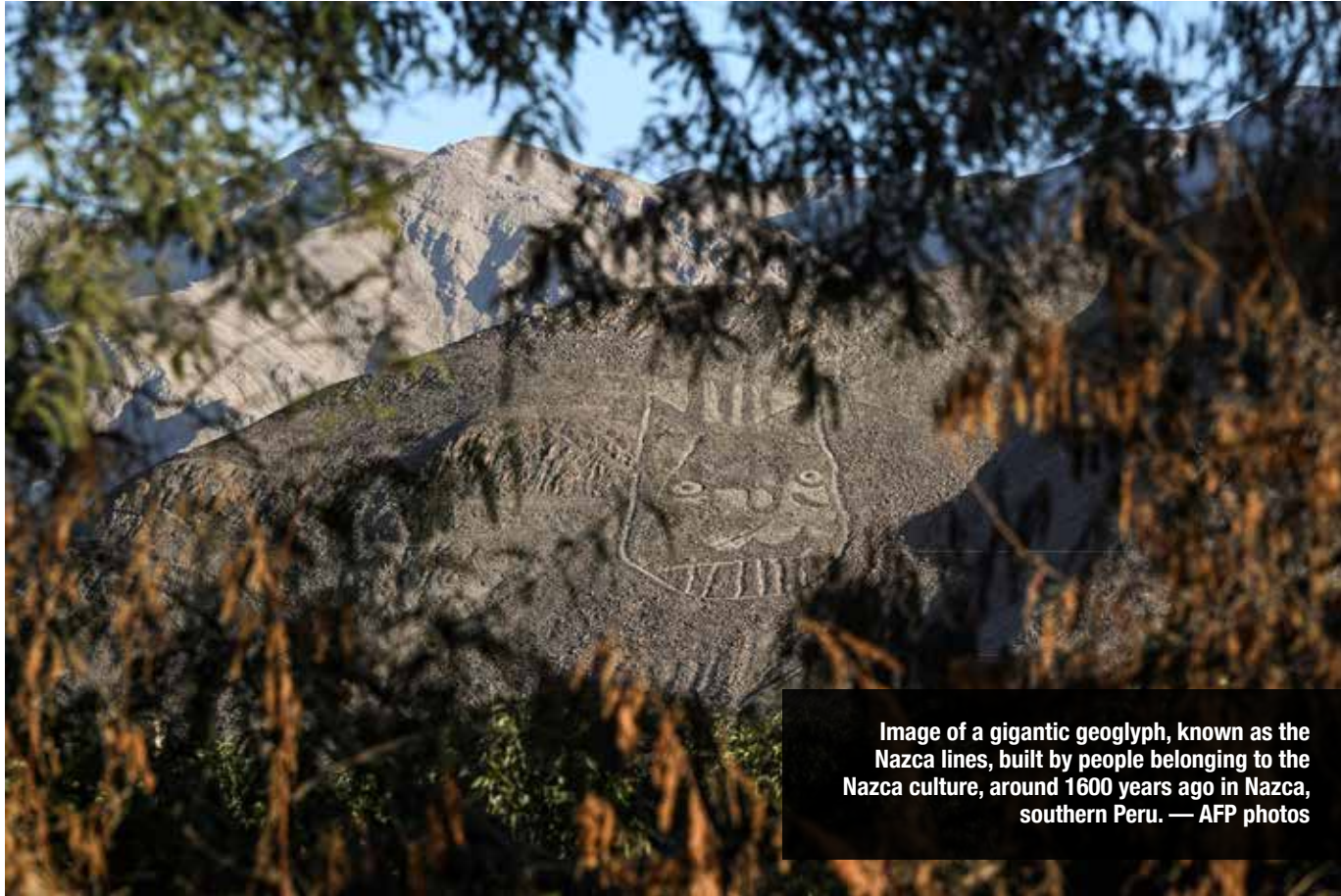


Image of a gigantic geoglyph, known as the Nazca lines, built by people belonging to the Nazca culture, around 1600 years ago in Nazca, southern Peru. — AFP photos



View of one of the Cantalallo aqueducts, built by people belonging to the Nazca culture, around 1600 years ago in Nazca, southern Peru.



A man walks inside one of the Cantalallo aqueducts, built by people belonging to the Nazca culture, around 1600 years ago in Nazca, southern Peru.

PRE-HISPANIC AQUEDUCTS IRRIGATE MODERN PERUVIAN CROPS

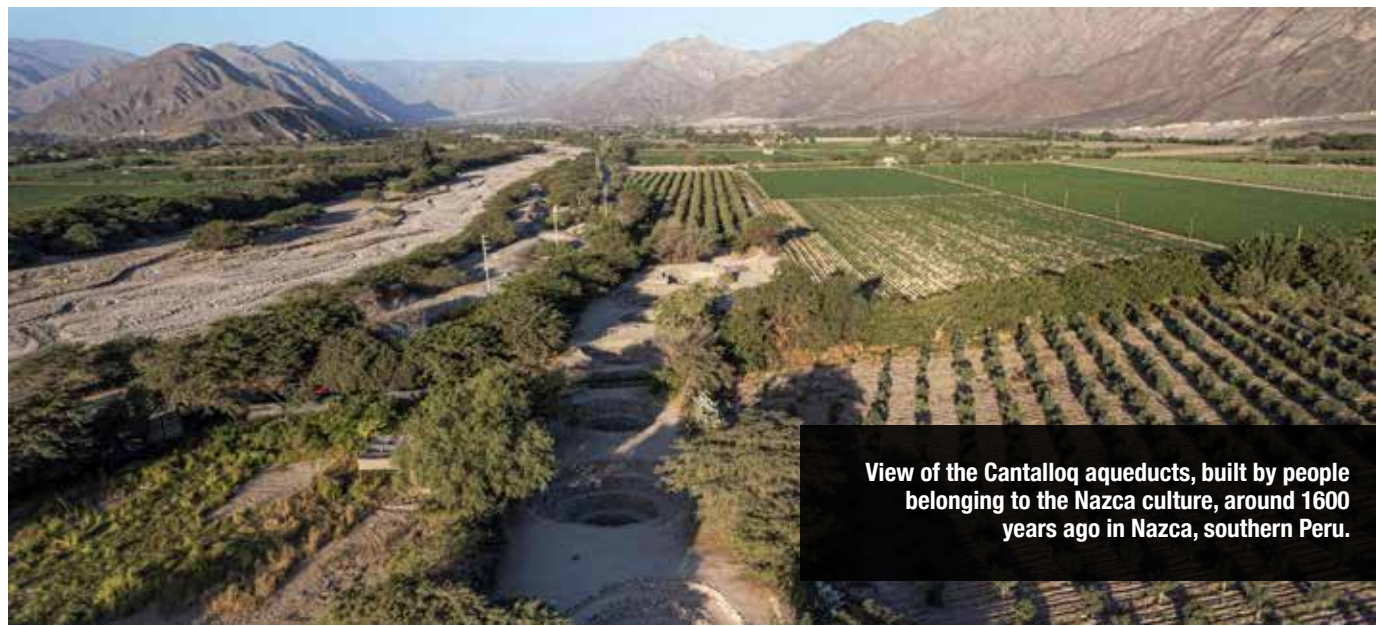


Image of gigantic geoglyphs, known as the Nazca lines, built by people belonging to the Nazca culture, around 1600 years ago in Nazca, southern Peru.

Built some 1,700 years ago by the pre-Hispanic Nazca people of Peru, an ingenious aqueduct system of wood and stone still provides farmers with water to this day. The complex labyrinth of channels and pits up to 15 meters (49 feet) deep brings critical drinking and irrigation water from far-away mountains and rivers to about 900 subsistence farming families in the Nazca desert in southern Peru.

In an otherwise arid landscape, they grow potatoes, cotton, vegetables and fruit trees. "It helps us to irrigate," said farmer Nicolas Quispe, 39, who waters his potatoes from the Nazca aqueduct system "thanks to the ancient farmers who had this advanced technology." Families like his pay a yearly fee equivalent to about \$32 for the supply. Often hailed as a marvel of ancient hydraulic engineering, the aqueducts have been submitted by Peru to UNESCO for listing as a cultural heritage.

According to the UN body, until the aqueducts were built, the shortage of water in the Peruvian desert hindered human settlement in an area where rivers are dry for most of the year. "The inhabitants of the Nazca culture managed to use the water from the underground water table through a technological innovation, formed by underground aqueducts that operated through a system of



View of the Cantalallo aqueducts, built by people belonging to the Nazca culture, around 1600 years ago in Nazca, southern Peru.

filtering galleries," the UNESCO website explains. "It is a simple system apparently, but at the same time it is sophisticated."

The system can transport some of 18 to 20 liters of water per second, according to Peruvian authorities. The aqueducts, 42 in total, are believed to have been built by the same people responsible for Peru's famous Nazca lines - a series of geometric and animal figures

carved into the desert which can only be appreciated from the sky. The function or meaning of the lines - a World Heritage Site since 1994 - remain unclear. Some believe they were for astronomical observation, others that they were part of a calendar.

As for the aqueducts, "we estimate that 29 are still in operation and thanks to this hydraulic system, as you can see, the entire valley is green," government

archaeologist Abdul Yalli told AFP. "This is a work of art, of architecture and of engineering," said Jorge Lopez-Doriga, a spokesman for the AJE Group multinational supporting local authorities in the upkeep of the aqueducts. "These stone channels, which had required the removal of millions of tons of sand to build, continue to function," he added. — AFP



Image of a Huarango tree (*Prosopis pallida*) of over 700 years old growing on top of rocks in Nazca, southern Peru.



View of the Cantalallo aqueducts, built by people belonging to the Nazca culture, around 1600 years ago in Nazca, southern Peru.



View of the Cantalallo aqueducts, built by people belonging to the Nazca culture, around 1600 years ago in Nazca, southern Peru.

Animal rights activists 'rescue' lambs from farm on royal estate

Animal rights campaigners said on Thursday they had "rescued" three lambs from slaughter on a farm on King Charles III's Sandringham estate in eastern England.

The Animal Rising activist group, which disrupted last month's Grand National steeplechase, said three of its members had entered the grounds of Appleton Farm on the royal estate late Wednesday and taken the lambs.

It posted footage on social media, arguing that the animals would have been sent for slaughter.

Three women - named as Rosa, Rose and Sarah - then turned themselves into police in Windsor, west of London, after posing for pictures outside the town's royal castle holding protest placards. One read: "I rescued the king's sheep". "They did this because rescuing animals from harm is the right thing to do," Animal Rising said on Twitter. "These women have acted out of compassion

and they stand by the belief that a jury of ordinary people will take the side of care and freedom.

"This is how we fix our broken relationship with animals." Police said they were investigating reports that three lambs had been stolen from a farm.

"Three women aged in their 20s and 30s voluntarily attended a police station... and were arrested on suspicion of theft," the force added. "They remain in custody."

Flower show targeted

Also on Thursday, police in London arrested three activists from the environmental pressure group Just Stop Oil, after they threw paint over a garden at the Chelsea Flower Show. The capital's Metropolitan Police said the trio were arrested on suspicion of criminal damage

and that its "enquiries are ongoing". The force released a picture showing orange paint splashed across an exhibit at the flower show, the highlight of the British horticultural year which opened to the public on Tuesday.

Just Stop Oil confirmed three women had thrown paint over a garden designed by Paul Hervey-Brookes, an award-winning plantsman, early on Thursday.

The group, which demands that the UK government stop all new fossil fuel projects, has staged a flurry of eye-catching direct-action protests in recent years. They include throwing tomato soup over Vincent van Gogh's "Sunflowers" painting and halting play at the World Snooker Championship after spraying orange powder on one of the tables. — AFP



This year's Eurovision reached 162 million viewers

Some 162 million viewers watched this year's Eurovision song competition held in Liverpool, the BBC said Friday also highlighting "record" engagement online.

The UK hosted the musical extravaganza on behalf of last year's winner Ukraine, due to the Russian invasion.

Sweden's Loreen secured a seventh victory for the Nordic country with the track "Tattoo" and made Eurovision history as the first woman to win the competition twice.

The contest "has never been more popular", said Noel Curran, director-general of the European Broadcasting Union that organized the competition. The figure counted viewers over the contest's three live shows - two semi-finals and the final - across 38 public service media markets.

In host country Britain around 9.9 million people tuned in for the Eurovision final on May 13, up 12 percent on last year.

Winner Sweden had an average audience of 2.3 million viewers, accounting for 82.3 percent of all TV viewers



in the country. Finland, which took second place, had 1.7 million viewers.

On TikTok, the three live shows were viewed 4.8 million times, while videos under the #Eurovision2023 hashtag garnered 4.8 billion views between April 30 and May 15.

Starting this year, viewers outside the 37 participating countries could take part in the voting process.

Votes were received from over 100 non-participating countries, including the United States, Canada, Turkey and New Zealand. — AFP



Louis Vuitton valiantly battled pounding rain on an Italian island paradise while presenting its cruise collection Wednesday night, the weather sending celebrity guests underneath umbrellas and dampening a hairdo or two. But when you're the flagship brand within the powerhouse LVMH portfolio, with a guest list that includes Catherine Deneuve, Cate Blanchett and Emma Stone, what's a little rain?

Bad weather was likely not top of mind when the storied luxury label led by Nicolas Ghesquiere chose the tiny Isola Bella, a jewel of an island in the azure waters of Lake Maggiore, as an appropriately jaw-dropping venue for its Cruise 2024 collection. But the rain arrived nonetheless, forcing the show originally planned for the island's formal terraced gardens to take place within the baroque Palazzo Borromeo, still owned

Louis Vuitton braves rain on its Italian island paradise



by the family of the same name whose noble ancestry dates to the 13th century.

"It's the one thing Nicolas can't control, is the weather," the editor-in-chief of Vogue Thailand, Ford Laosuksri, told AFP after the show, as guests lingered to sip bubbly while hoping (in vain) for the rain to stop. Laosuksri was wearing a crocheted floral top and sandals — an endearing

if not foolhardy gesture amid the steady rain.

"I didn't want to ruin my velvet shoes," he confided. Ghesquiere, Louis Vuitton's artistic director since 2013, sent models through the ornate, high-ceilinged rooms of the 17th-century palazzo in eclectic, futuristic creations for which he is celebrated. Some looks recalled scuba gear adorned with avant garde ruffling, while others felt like fencers' uniforms, protective with thick quilting over the chest.

Fabric was cinched tight like an accordion at the bodice of a sleeveless dress with color blocks in royal blue and yellow gold, imparting texture and movement, while a shiny black dress came with a drawstring neckline that called to mind a popular handbag by the brand. Sweaters became more airy with a translucent stripe

at the midriff, while three chiffon gowns cut on the bias — in dusty pink, sea green and baby blue — sported exaggerated puffy sleeves worthy of the Edwardian age. "It was beautiful, it was flowy but still powerful," said Philippine actress Heart Evangelista.

From fishing to fashion

Louis Vuitton's event was the first-ever fashion show allowed on

Isola Bella, a former fishing village transformed by the Borromeos into a sumptuous paradise fit for royalty. Kings, queens and emperors have been guests at Palazzo Borromeo over the years, including Queen Victoria, Napoleon and Josephine, and even Prince Charles and Princess Diana in 1985. On Wednesday celebrities and influencers from around the world — including US actress Jennifer Connelly and Felix from K-Pop's Stray Kids — descended on the island.

Trying not to slip, guests took cover under the transparent umbrellas provided by the brand before escaping into the palazzo. Following the show, some guests stood on benches and posed for pictures under the watchful gaze of centuries of Borromeo elders whose portraits line the walls.

Cruise collections are designed to offer warm-weather wardrobes for jet-setters lucky enough to escape to sunny locales during the drab winter months. In recent years, they have become destination events, with brands choosing more and more exotic spots to backdrop their luxury looks. Louis Vuitton's show comes on the heels of Dior's, which showed a Frida Kahlo-inspired cruise collection in Mexico City Saturday, and Chanel's earlier this month at Hollywood's Paramount Studios. — AFP



Models walk during the dress rehearsal of the Louis Vuitton Cruise 2024 fashion show in Isola Bella, a small island on Lake Maggiore, near Stresa. — AFP photos

Sports

'Superstar' Gill's ton powers Gujarat Titans into IPL final

Gill's 60-ball knock fires Gujarat to 233-3

AHMEDABAD: Shubman Gill called his 129 his "best innings" in the Indian Premier League after he powered champions Gujarat Titans into the final with a 62-run thrashing of Mumbai Indians. Gill's 60-ball knock - his third ton in four IPL innings - fired Gujarat to 233-3, a total they defended by bowling out five-time winners Mumbai for 171 in 18.2 overs in the final playoff which started late due to rain in Ahmedabad. They will play Chennai Super Kings in the final on Sunday at the same venue.

Named man of the match, Gill said: "I think this was probably my best innings so far in the IPL." Skipper Hardik Pandya praised his opener, saying: "Today's innings was one of the finest, he never looked rushed. It felt like someone was throwing balls and he was hitting. He will be a superstar in international and franchise cricket." Gill hit 10 sixes and put on a second-wicket stand of 138 with Sai Sudharsan, who made 43, to tear into the opposition attack at the world's biggest cricket stadium.

He became the leading batsman this season with 851 runs, surpassing Royal Challengers Bangalore skipper Faf du Plessis (730), before he reached his IPL best and the top score of this season. Fast bowler Mohit Sharma took five wickets for Gujarat, who won last year's crown in a fairytale debut season, after a valiant 61 by Suryakumar Yadav. The 132,000-capacity stadium had over 75,000 fans in attendance to witness the home team triumph. Opener Gill, who is tipped as the future of Indian batting, made the most of a reprieve on 30 when Tim David dropped

him off England fast bowler Chris Jordan.

Little impact

The 23-year-old Gill brought up his fifty in 32 balls and then exploded to smash sixes and reach his hundred in 49 balls, taking a bow amid a standing ovation. He finally fell to Akash Madhwal and Sudharsan retired out before Pandya, who made an unbeaten 13-ball 28, and Rashid Khan finished the innings on a high with 19 runs in the final over.

Mumbai's worries increased when wicketkeeper Ishan Kishan was injured after he was caught by the elbow of team-mate Jordan. He was later replaced by concussion substitute Vishnu Vinod. Tilak Varma struck 43 off 14 balls as he smashed Mohammed Shami for four fours and a six in an over but was soon bowled by Rashid's leg spin. Suryakumar attempted to mount the chase in his 38-ball knock and put on a key 51-run stand with Cameron Green, who hit 30 in a stop-start innings after being hit on the elbow by Pandya.

Ireland's left-arm quick Josh Little, who came in as an impact sub for Gill after the Gujarat innings, bowled Green. Suryakumar made his fifty in 33 balls but was bowled by Mohit, who struck twice in one over to derail the innings. Rashid trapped David lbw for two and hopes ended for Mumbai, who last won the crown in 2020. "We had a great performance last game. We have to credit Shubman. I hope he continues that form," said skipper Rohit Sharma. MS Dhoni's Chennai beat Gujarat in the first playoff earlier this week. — AFP



AHMEDABAD: Gujarat Titans' Shubman Gill celebrates after scoring a century (100 runs) during the Indian Premier League (IPL) Twenty20 second qualifier cricket match between Mumbai Indians and Gujarat Titans at the Narendra Modi Stadium. — AFP

Today's Matches

English Premier League		
Arsenal v Wolverhampton	18:30	beIN Sports HD Xtra 2
Aston Villa v Brighton & Hove Albion	18:30	beIN Sports HD 2
Brentford v Manchester City	18:30	beIN Sports HD 3 English
Chelsea v Newcastle United	18:30	beIN Sports HD Premium
Crystal Palace v Nottingham Forest	18:30	beIN Sports HD 2 English
Everton v Bournemouth	18:30	beIN Sports HD 1 English
Leeds v Tottenham	18:30	beIN Sports HD 3
Leicester v West Ham	18:30	beIN Sports HD 7
Manchester United v Fulham	18:30	beIN Sports 1 HD Premium
Southampton v Liverpool	18:30	beIN Sports HD Xtra 1
Spanish League		
Athletic de Bilbao v Elche	20:00	beIN SPORTS
Atletico de Madrid v Real Sociedad	20:00	beIN Sports HD 1
Barcelona v Real Mallorca	20:00	beIN Sports HD 2
Getafe v Osasuna	20:00	beIN SPORTS
Cadiz v Celta de Vigo	20:00	beIN Sports Connect
Rayo Vallecano v Villarreal	20:00	beIN SPORTS
Almeria v Real Valladolid	20:00	beIN SPORTS
Girona v Real Betis	20:00	beIN SPORTS
Valencia v Espanyol	20:00	beIN Sports HD 4
Italian League Serie A		
Hellas Verona v Empoli	13:30	AD SPORTS Premium 1
Bologna v Napoli	16:00	AD SPORTS Premium 1
Monza v Lecce	16:00	AD SPORTS Premium 2
Lazio v Cremonese	19:00	AD SPORTS Premium 1
Juventus v AC Milan	21:45	AD SPORTS Premium 1



KUWAIT: Kuwait's Shooter Khalid Al-Mudhaf won the bronze medal at the World Cup Championship being held in Kazakhstan on Saturday. The gold medal went to Italian Shooter Massimo Fabbrizi and silver to Australia's James Willitt.



CHENNAI: Chennai Super Kings' Mahendra Singh Dhoni catches a helmet during the Indian Premier League (IPL) Twenty20 first qualifier cricket match at the MA Chidambaram Stadium. — AFP

Dhoni faces red-hot Gill in IPL final

AHMEDABAD: Barring a surprise, Chennai Super Kings skipper MS Dhoni will step out as a player for the last time when his side take on holders Gujarat Titans in the IPL final on Sunday. The cricketing great is widely expected to retire - he has only said he will decide on his future later this year - and the spotlight will be on him with Chennai eyeing a record-equaling fifth title at the world's biggest cricket stadium in Ahmedabad.

Standing in Chennai's way will be Gujarat opener Shubman Gill, fresh from smashing a century - his third in the IPL - in the final playoff on Friday at the same venue. Gill's three IPL tons have all come in his last four innings, his latest a brutal 129 off 60 balls to demolish five-time winners Mumbai Indians. Gujarat Skipper Hardik Pandya said the 23-year-old "will be a superstar in international and franchise cricket".

And former India batsman Sanjay Manjrekar, on the ESPNcricinfo website, called Gill a "once in a generation player". Gill leads this season's batting chart with 851 runs after surpassing Bangalore skipper Faf du Plessis (730) in the final playoff and Gujarat will look to him for a starting flourish. Gujarat have extended a fairytale journey which began with a title in their debut season last year, when Pandya

Palou hunts for first win

WASHINGTON: Alex Palou starts from pole in the 107th Indianapolis 500 on Sunday, but the Spaniard isn't concerned about defending any early lead at Indianapolis Motor Speedway - only about leading at the end. For the past three years the pole-sitter has surrendered the lead on the opening lap. That included Palou, second on the grid, overtaking Chip Ganassi Teammate Scott Dixon before one circuit was completed on the 2.5-mile oval last year.

"I'm going to control the first lap with the first two corners, because it's almost guaranteed that I'm not going to lead the first lap," Palou said. "So I'm ready for not to lead the first lap. And hopefully we can lead the second one." Palou led 42 of the first 68 laps last year, but when a caution forced him to stop for fuel when the pits were closed, he was left at the back of the field and he was unable to recover, eventually finishing ninth in the race won by Sweden's Marcus Ericsson.

It's just one example of the surprises that can upend the best-laid plans over the course of 500 intense miles. "There's so many things out of your control in this race," Palou said. "If it was another race, and I was on pole, I'd be like, 'Oh yeah, we're going to control and do this and that.'"

"Not this one. You can control your first run for sure, which is really important to have a slower race that way that you don't have to rush to get into the top 10 and save fuel at the end or do crazy stuff to

raised the Cup in Ahmedabad in front of a record 101,566 fans at the 132,000-capacity stadium.

With home advantage, betting odds make the team the slightest of favorites to repeat the feat on Sunday, but Pandya remained cautious about their chances. "We have to play good cricket, put in our 100 percent," he said. "Knockouts could go either way." Afghanistan spin ace Rashid Khan and pace spearhead Mohammed Shami have been key to the team's success with 55 wickets between them in 16 matches. Shami has bagged 28 - one more than Rashid - and the fight for the purple cap for the highest wicket-taker in the tournament goes down to the wire.

'Annoying' Dhoni

Dhoni's Chennai took second spot after the group stage behind table-toppers Gujarat but beat the defending champions in the first playoff earlier this week to bag a spot in the final. The 41-year-old Dhoni is a master tactician dubbed "Captain Cool" for his calm under pressure. "You see the wicket, you see conditions, and you keep adjusting the field," Dhoni said. "I can be an annoying captain because I change the field every time. It can be annoying but I believe in my gut feel. That's why I keep telling the fielders to keep an eye on me."

His ability to run between the wickets has been hampered by a knee injury and he has usually batted at number eight this season, looking to hit a few sixes to finish off the innings. Called "Thala" - meaning "leader" in Tamil - the former India captain has attracted huge crowds across venues in what is believed to be his last playing season. But Dhoni said he

overtake. "But as soon as the first pit stop is going, we are losing control of everything." Palou leads the fastest field in Indianapolis 500 history. His four-lap average of 234.217 mph (376.94 Km/h) crushed the previous pole mark, and the three cars on the front row all averaged above 234 mph for the first time. Just 2.121 seconds separate Palou from the 33rd and final qualifier Jack Harvey.

Ed Carpenter Racing's Rinus VeeKay of the Netherlands is second on the grid and Sweden's Felix Rosenqvist of Arrow McLaren, who topped both of the first two qualifying sessions, was third-quickest in pole qualifying. While Palou is well-aware that the pole sitter has won the race just once in the past 13 years, he's still hoping he can buck that trend and add the Indy 500 to the GMR Grand Prix title he won the road course at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway earlier in May.

Meanwhile Mexico's Pato O'Ward starts from fifth on the grid and will be hoping to go one better than his runner-up finish to Ericsson last year. He's joined on the second row of the grid by AJ Foyt Racing's Santino Ferrucci and Dixon - a six-time Indy-Car champion who started from pole the past two years. New Zealand's Dixon, who won the Indy 500 in 2008, endured frustration the past three years as he tried to win again. He led 111 of 200 laps in 2020, was knocked off stride by an early race caution in 2021 and received the pit lane penalty last year.

Dixon isn't the only veteran in the hunt. Tony Kanaan, the 2013 winner, and four-time Indy 500 champion Helio Castroneves - both of Brazil - are both 48 years old. Three drivers - David Malukas,



CHENNAI: Chennai Super Kings' Mahendra Singh Dhoni catches a helmet during the Indian Premier League (IPL) Twenty20 first qualifier cricket match at the MA Chidambaram Stadium. — AFP

would always be available in any capacity for Chennai, a team he has captained since the start of the IPL, which began in 2008 and is the world's richest T20 tournament.

Openers Devon Conway (625 runs) and Ruturaj Gaikwad (564) have provided Chennai with good starts, and all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja came into his own in the team's last win. Indian fast bowler Tushar Deshpande and Sri Lankan quick Matheesha Pathirana have led the bowling charge with 21 and 17 wickets. Pathirana, called "Baby Malinga" for his ability to bowl yorkers with a slinging action similar to former pace ace Lasith Malinga, has been Dhoni's go-to bowler at the back end. — AFP



INDIANAPOLIS: Alex Palou, driver of the #10 The American Legion Chip Ganassi Racing Honda, drives during practice at Carb Day for the 107th Indianapolis 500 at Indianapolis Motor Speedway on May 26, 2023 in Indianapolis. — AFP

Sting Ray Robb and Christian Lundgaard - are 21 and could break the record for youngest winner set by 22-year-old Troy Ruttman back in 1952.

The strong Chip Ganassi challenge led by Palou also features two-time winner Takuma Sato of Japan, who is driving only ovals for the team this year and qualified eighth-fastest, two spots ahead of defending champion and Ganassi teammate Ericsson. Palou is the only Ganassi driver who hasn't won the Indianapolis 500, and Sato and Dixon topped the times in Friday's final practice session. Arrow McLaren, with Rosenqvist and O'Ward leading the way, have been impressive in the build-up to the race and boast two previous winners among this year's top-10 qualifiers in Alexander Rossi and Kanaan. — AFP

Sports

Crusaders romp past Waratahs 42-18, remain 2nd in standings

Afoa sets Super Rugby age record

CHRISTCHURCH: Prop John Afoa became Super Rugby's oldest-ever player as his Canterbury Crusaders coasted past the New South Wales Waratahs 42-18 on Saturday to remain second in the standings. Former All Black Afoa played his part after a surprise late call-up as the Crusaders scored six tries to three in Christchurch. It left their Australian opponents in sixth place, where they are guaranteed to remain ahead of the top-eight finals series regardless of the results in next week's last round of regular season matches.

Fly-half Richie Mo'unga was a try-scorer and did not miss a shot at goal in a 17-point haul as the defending champion Crusaders notched a ninth win from their last 10 games, after making a sluggish start to the season. A highlight was the starting appearance of Afoa, who from France two days earlier following a plea from coach Scott Robertson, who is without three injured All Blacks - Joe Moody, George Bower and Fletcher Newell - for the remainder of the season.

Former Auckland Blues tighthead Afoa had not played a Super Rugby match since 2011 and, at the age of 39 years and 223 days, became the competition's oldest player. After his 496th first-class game - more than half of which have been with Europe-

an clubs Ulster, Gloucester and Bristol - Afoa said he jumped at the chance to play for the Crusaders. "When the call came, it doesn't matter if it's the Crusaders or the Blues, I was just keen to come home and play in front of New Zealanders and my family," he told broadcaster Sky Sport.

"The last couple of days have been a bit of a whirlwind but it's been amazing. I don't have many moons left in my career, this is probably the last year of my career." David Havili was among the first-half try-scorers as the Crusaders pulled 28-8 clear, but the All Blacks midfielder limped off late in the game with a hamstring injury. Adding to the team's mounting medical list were knee injuries to loose forwards Cullen Grace and Christian Lio-Willie.

Earlier on Saturday, last-placed Moana Pasifika narrowly missed securing their first win of the season, going down 47-46 to Fijian Drua in Lautoka. Moana fly-half Christian Leali'ifano missed an 80th-minute conversion attempt, to gift the Drua their fifth win and lift them to 10th on the ladder. It leaves the Fijian side needing to beat the Queensland Reds next week to have any chance of qualifying for the top eight for the first time. Both teams scored seven tries in a spectacular contest, with Drua centre Iosefo Masi bagging a hat-trick. — AFP



CHRISTCHURCH: Crusaders' David Havili (center) is tackled by the Waratahs' Moses Tuipulotu (right) and Charlie Gamble during the round 14 Super Rugby Pacific match between the Crusaders and the New South Wales Waratahs on May 27, 2023. — AFP

Milan clubs race for Serie A top 4 places

MILAN: As champions Napoli continue their victory tour at Bologna on Sunday, the remaining important business in Serie A could be wrapped up on the penultimate weekend of the Serie A season. When Juventus, who started Monday in second place, suffered a double blow in the evening with a 10-point penalty for illicit transfer activity that dropped them to seventh and then a dispiriting 4-1 defeat at Empoli, Lazio inherited second and were guaranteed a top-four finish.

The points deduction also put the two Milan clubs on the brink of securing Champions League places. They can help themselves, and each other, this weekend if they both beat teams that could catch them. Inter, who won the Coppa Italia on Wednesday and have an eye on the Champions League next final next month, are third and on Saturday host Atalanta who are fifth.

Inter have a five-point edge on Atalanta, with Roma another point back in sixth, so while a victory over Manchester City in Istanbul would qualify them for next season's competition, they can make sure by locking up a top-four place. A draw on Sunday will be enough. "We have two league games and then the final in Istanbul for a great end to the season," said Inter coach Filippo Inzaghi, after his team beat Fiorentina in the Italian Cup final on Wednesday. AC Milan, who jumped to fourth when Juventus were punished, are two points behind Inter.



ROME: Inter Milan's Argentinean forward Lautaro Martinez celebrates after winning the Italian Cup (Coppa Italia) final football match at the Stadio Olimpico in Rome. — AFP

Milan can be caught not only by Atalanta and Roma but by the wounded team they visit on Sunday evening, Juventus. If Inter do not lose, AC Milan know a victory will be enough even with round to go. At the bottom, Cremonese and Sampdoria are already down. Hellas Verona are in the other relegation

spot but just a point behind Lecce and two behind Spezia. All three face mid-table clubs with little to play for. If Verona lose to in-form Empoli early on Sunday and Spezia beat visiting Torino on Saturday and Lecce win at Monza later on Sunday, Hellas will be doomed. — AFP

Auckland City book Club WCup berth

PORT VILA: Auckland City FC's coach says his team of amateurs will throw everything into the FIFA Club World Cup after qualifying on Saturday for a record 11th time. The New Zealand side gained entry via a 4-2 win in extra time over Fiji's Suva FC in a dramatic Oceania Football Confederation Champions League final in Port Vila, Vanuatu. It earned the Navy Blues another ticket to the elite club tournament in Saudi Arabia in December.

No team has qualified for the event more than Auckland City FC and coach Albert Riera said although they'll once again be massive underdogs, they'll hold nothing back against the champion clubs from each FIFA region. "We're not professionals, these guys they have jobs, they work every day and after that they pretty much go and train every day," Riera said. "We demand a lot from the players, people think we're professionals but we're not. The only thing we do is try to be better and try to inspire others."

Auckland City becomes the second team to earn a berth at the seven-team Club World Cup, after Asian champions Urawa Red Diamonds of Japan. While they have largely struggled at the global tournament, the Aucklanders pulled off a series of upsets in 2014 to finish third, behind champions Real Madrid and Argentina's San Lorenzo. Striker Ryan de Vries, who was in the 2014 squad, scored two goals against Suva FC, including the team's fourth, deep in extra time to seal the outcome. — AFP

Djokovic eyes history at the French Open

PARIS: Novak Djokovic will bid for a record-breaking 23rd Grand Slam title at a French Open without his old rival Rafael Nadal for the first time since 2004, while Iga Swiatek attempts to become the first woman to defend the title in 16 years. Serbian veteran Djokovic will not be the favorite for the title, though, after struggling with an elbow injury and failing to get past the quarter-finals in any of his three clay-court events so far this season.

Carlos Alcaraz won the Barcelona and Madrid Opens en route to taking over from Djokovic as world number one, while Daniil Medvedev is seeded second for Roland Garros after his maiden clay triumph in Rome. But Djokovic will know this is a massive opportunity to break out of his tie with 14-time French Open winner Nadal at the top of the all-time list of most men's Slam singles titles. The two-time champion has lost eight of his 10 French Open meetings with Nadal who is missing this year's edition due to a hip injury he suffered at the Australian Open.

Djokovic and Alcaraz are seeded to meet in the semi-finals after being placed in the same half of the draw. "I felt bad when I hear that Rafa was not able to play here in Roland Garros," said Alcaraz on Friday. "I always want to watch the best players in the world playing the tournaments." The 36-year-old Djokovic may also have to get past Monte Carlo Masters champion Andrey Rublev in the quarters. The other side of the draw appears wide open, with in-form Medvedev the highest seed despite never having previously got past the quarter-finals on the Paris clay.

The Russian lost in the first round on each of his first four visits before making the quarters in 2021. "I also don't want to put too much pressure on myself, in a way," said Medvedev. "But what happened in Rome was amazing, especially beating a lot of good players." Danish youngster Holger Rune, who made a surprise run to last year's quarter-finals, could face Casper Ruud in the last eight in a rematch of a bad-tempered meeting 12 months ago.

Ruud went on to be thrashed in the final by Nadal and also lost the US Open showpiece match to Alcaraz. But the Norwegian world number four has struggled for form this year, only reaching the quarters in two of the 10 tournaments he has played. Stefanos Tsitsipas, who lost the 2021 final to Djokovic after being two sets up, will be among



PARIS: Spectators walk in front of the Court Susan Lenglen ahead of the start of the Roland-Garros Open tennis tournament in Paris on May 27, 2023. —AFP

the likely contenders but has not won a title yet this term — the longest he has had to wait for a trophy in a season since 2018.

The winner of the women's singles is expected to be one of the trio of reigning champion Swi-

atek, Australian Open winner Aryna Sabalenka and Elena Rybakina. They have won the last four Grand Slam titles between them and at least one of them has featured in every WTA 1000 final this season. — AFP

Classifieds

Change of Name

We, Firoz Ahamed, holder of Indian Passport No. M3188091, issued in Kuwait on 22/11/2014 and Fathima Khatoon, holder of Indian Passport No. S9923284, issued in Kuwait on 08/11/2018, permanent address, No. 4089, 2nd cross, 2nd stage, Kumarswamy Layout, Bangalore - 5960078, Karnataka, India, declare that we have changed our minor son's name from Khidash Firoz Ahamed to Muhammad Omar, holding Indian Passport No. T6756273, issued in Kuwait on 20/08/2019 and Civil ID No.315012501706, presently residing in block 11, street Yatrib Bldg. No. 14, Al Salmiya, Kuwait and permanent address in India, No. 4089, 2nd cross,

2nd stage, Kumarswamy Layout, Bangalore - 5960078, Karnataka, India. In all his dealings and documents, he will be known by the name of Muhammad Omar. (#3543) 26/05/2023

I, Md Forhad Hossain, holder of valid Bangladeshi Passport No. EK0911221, do hereby change my son's name to Sajid (given name) Forhad (surname), holder of valid Bangladeshi Passport No. EL0446996 for all future purposes. He will henceforth be known in the name Sajid Forhad and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all his documents (#3544) 26/05/2023

I, Geja, holder of Indian Passport No. P7110431, having permanent address Punjab, India - 144620, residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as Gurmej (given name) and Singh (surname). (#3541) 25/05/2023

I, Ajij, S/o Saifuddin, Civil ID No. 281061504679, Passport No. Z3828425, hereby declare that I have changed my name as Aziz Arif S/o Saifuddin Arif. So from now in future I will be known by my new name: Aziz Arif, S/o Saifuddin Arif, Address: 107, Ward No.18, Saket Residency, Barwani, (M.P) - 451551, India. (#3542) 25/05/2023

I, Taher, holder of Indian Passport No. U9301842, issued in Jaipur on 04/03/2021 and Civil ID No. 306020902089, have changed my name Taher to Taher Companywala in all dealings and documents. I will be known by name of Taher (given name) and Companywala (surname) (#3539) 24/05/2023

I, Inus, S/o Mohammed Amin, holder of Indian Passport No. L-1434907, issued in Kuwait on 11-09-2013, permanent resident of B-sector, V-1-line, room no. 05, Cheeta Camp, Mumbai-400088, presently residing in Khaitan, Block-09, Street-30, Unit-1,

Building No.10, Kuwait will henceforth be known as Mohammed Yunus Mohammed Amin (given name) Shaikh (surname) as per documents. Objection(s), if any, may be forwarded to Embassy of India, State of Kuwait. (#3540) 24/05/2023

I, Rashida, holder of Indian Passport No. P5031442, issued in Jaipur on 27/09/2016 and Civil ID No. 281022207276, have changed my name Rashida to Rashida Companywala in all dealings and documents. I will be known by name of Rashida (given name) and Companywala (surname). (#3539) 24/05/2023

Chiefs topple Brumbies 31-21

Relentless Waikato Chiefs seal top spot



CANBERRA: Luke Jacobson of the Chiefs (center) is tackled during the Super Rugby match between the Brumbies and Chiefs at GIO Stadium in Canberra on May 27, 2023. — AFP

CANBERRA: A relentless Waikato Chiefs cruised past the ACT Brumbies 31-21 on Saturday to ensure they will finish the Super Rugby Pacific season top of the table, booking a home quarter-final. Sam Cane's side have been dominant all season with victory in freezing Canberra their 12th from 13 games, leaving them uncatchable on 54 points ahead of the Canterbury Crusaders with one match to play.

They can now look forward to a quarter-final clash in Hamilton against the eighth-placed side, currently Otago Highlanders although five teams remain in contention for the last two knockout places still up for grabs. "A very tough game especially in the first half. But defence is

something we have been proud of all season and it fronted up again tonight," said Cane. "We knew the importance of this game and we treated it like that."

A stunning solo try from Luke Jacobson and another from Josh Ioane sent them to the break with a 17-7 lead and they never looked like relinquishing it. A perfectly timed interception by Cortez Ratima bagged them a third before Shaun Stevenson added a fourth, with Damien McKenzie booting all four conversions and a penalty. The defending champion Canterbury Crusaders will also benefit from being at home in the knockout rounds, with their 42-18 romp against the NSW Waratahs in Christchurch all but ensuring they finish second.

That would pit them against the seventh-place side, currently Queensland Reds. Fly-half Richie Mo'unga was a try-scorer and did not miss a shot at goal in a 17-point haul as the Crusaders notched a ninth win from their last 10 games, after a sluggish start to the season. A highlight was the starting appearance of prop John Afoa, who arrived from France two days earlier following a plea from coach Scott Robertson who was without three injured All Blacks - Joe Moody, George Bower and Fletcher Newell.

The former Auckland Blues tighthead had not played a Super Rugby match since 2011 and, at the age of 39 years and 223 days, became the competition's

oldest player. After his 496th first-class game - more than half of which have been with European clubs Ulster, Gloucester and Bristol - Afoa jumped at the chance to play for the Crusaders.

"When the call came, it doesn't matter if it's the Crusaders or the Blues, I was just keen to come home and play in front of New Zealanders and my family," he told broadcaster Sky Sport. "The last couple of days have been a bit of a whirlwind but it's been amazing." David Havili was among the first-half try-scorers as the Crusaders pulled 28-8 clear, but the All Blacks midfielder limped off late on with a hamstring injury. The Auckland Blues could feasibly overtake the Crusaders,

but they would need a bonus point win in their final game against the Highlanders and other results to go their way.

A dazzling four-try display from Mark Telea guided them to a frantic 36-25 win over the Wellington Hurricanes at a rain-soaked Eden Park to push them into the third, a point ahead of the Brumbies. Earlier, last-placed Moana Pasifika narrowly missed securing their first win of the season, going down 47-46 to Fijian Drua in Lautoka. Moana fly-half Christian Lealiifano missed an 80th-minute conversion attempt to lift Drua to 10th on the ladder, leaving them needing to beat the Reds next week to have any chance of qualifying for the top eight. — AFP

Vinicius suffers knee problem

MADRID: Vinicius Junior, subjected to racial abuse last weekend, will miss a second successive match due to a knee problem, Real Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti said. The 22-year-old Brazilian winger has received worldwide support since being racially abused by Valencia fans last Sunday. Los Che's punishment was also reduced by Spain's appeal committee, with a five-match partial stadium closure reduced to three games.

Vinicius did not play against Rayo Vallecano in Madrid's midweek win because of some knee discomfort, but was present as his team-mates showed him their support by wearing his number 20 shirt before the game. He has failed to shake off the problem for Saturday's away match with Europa League finalists Sevilla.

"Vinicius will not travel because he will not play, he'd go if he had the chance of playing (but) his knee is still giving him problems," Ancelotti told a news conference Friday. "It doesn't matter if it's home or away, he can't play. I hope that he can play in the last game." Vinicius was sent off against Valencia but his ban was later overturned by the Spanish football federation's Competition Committee. One Sevilla fan group are encouraging supporters to protest against Real Madrid and their president Florentino Perez because of the decision by waving white handkerchiefs at the game.

Appeal

Valencia contested their punishment following the incident and the Spanish football federation's appeal committee reduced the sanctions against them on Friday. The Spanish side must close the south stand of their Mestalla stadium for three home matches instead of five, while their fine was also reduced from 45,000 euros to 27,000 euros (\$29,000). Valencia host Espanyol on Sunday in La Liga in a vital match



BRASILIA: Members of social movements take part in a demonstration in support of Real Madrid's Brazilian forward Vinicius Jr outside the Embassy of Spain in Brasilia. — AFP

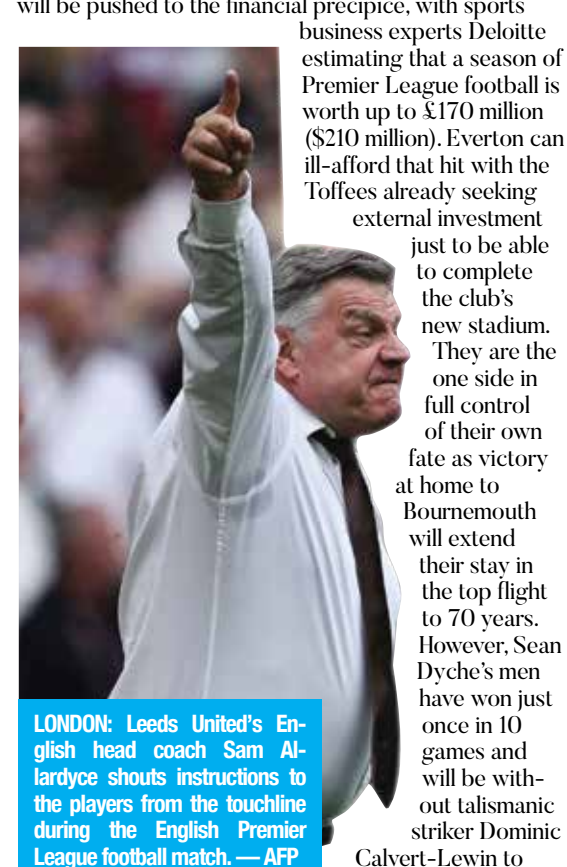
with both teams battling relegation, in which the stand will be closed.

Three Valencia fans were arrested after the 22-year-old Brazilian winger was abused last Sunday during Los Che's 1-0 win over Madrid. A court in Valencia opened an investigation into the abuse on Friday, and Vinicius will testify via video-conference, as he has done previously. The Brazilian has been the victim of multiple instances of racism over the past two years in Spain. Barcelona defender Alejandro Balde showed his support for Vinicius despite the animosity between their two clubs, as Brazilian winger Raphinha also did with a message on his shirt in midweek.

Vinicius said Spain was viewed as a racist country in his homeland Brazil and Balde, a Spanish international, said he has suffered issues himself. "In the world of football I've not had a problem with racism but I have in the street, me and my family," Balde told GQ in an interview published Friday. "When I was little I remember playing in a park and the kids told me and my brother that their families did not let them play with black (children). My parents have had trouble getting work because of the color of their skin. My brother has been stopped in the street and asked for his documents for no reason." — AFP

Everton, Leicester and Leeds battle for EPL survival

LONDON: The battle for Premier League survival is the main event of Sunday's final day of the season as Everton, Leicester and Leeds face a nerve-wracking scrap to avoid relegation. The two clubs who join already-relegated Southampton in the second tier will be pushed to the financial precipice, with sports



LONDON: Leeds United's English head coach Sam Allardyce shouts instructions to the players from the touchline during the English Premier League football match. — AFP

business experts Deloitte estimating that a season of Premier League football is worth up to £170 million (\$210 million). Everton can ill-afford that hit with the Toffees already seeking external investment just to be able to complete the club's new stadium. They are the one side in full control of their own fate as victory at home to Bournemouth will extend their stay in the top flight to 70 years. However, Sean Dyche's men have won just once in 10 games and will be without talismanic striker Dominic Calvert-Lewin to

offer Leicester and Leeds hope. "We want the players to focus on the game," said Dyche on Friday. "It's not as easy as it sounds but that's the idea: focus on what's going on the pitch and don't worry about all the noise. "Don't worry about all the rumors, don't worry about anything that's going on off the pitch."

If fourth bottom Everton fail to win, third bottom Leicester can survive by beating West Ham at home thanks to their superior goal difference. Seven years ago, the Foxes were celebrating the most unlikely of title triumphs. That kicked off a glorious era as they finished fifth in back-to-back seasons in 2019/20 and 2020/21 and won the FA Cup for the first time just two years ago under Brendan Rodgers. Mayny believed a squad boasting the talents of James Maddison, Youri Tielemans and Harvey Barnes was too good to go down. But the fairytale has turned into a nightmare this season as Rodgers bemoaned a lack of investment to refresh the squad before he was sacked in April. Dean Smith has been unable to mastermind a turnaround in fortunes with just one win in his seven games in charge. "We have to win the game and not look at the Everton result until after the game," said Smith. "We have to do our job and see where it takes us." Second bottom Leeds need a miracle to avoid the end of their three-season stay in the top-flight.

Victory over Tottenham at Elland Road will only be enough for Leeds boss Sam Allardyce to pull off another great escape if Everton lose and Leicester fail to win. Should Everton manage even a draw, Leeds will need to beat Tottenham by three goals to surpass them on goal difference. "I just hope that we're talking on a very positive nature on Monday morning and I have a hangover!" Allardyce said on the possibility he could remain at the club beyond his caretaker role till the end of the season. Tottenham's result could have a bearing on the only other issue yet to be resolved - qualification for next season's Europa Conference League. Aston Villa are in pole position and will secure a return to Europe for the first time in 13 years with victory over Brighton. Tottenham can sneak into seventh place should they better Villa's result. But if neither side win then Brentford could qualify for Europe for the first time in their history with a shock win over champions Manchester City in west London. Arsenal, Manchester United and Newcastle are already assured of joining City in next season's Champions League. Liverpool and Brighton will be in the Europa League. — AFP